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# LOVAT DICKSON'S MAGAZINE

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HUGH FORSYTH

## *King Timothy Opens Parliament*

IT was late one winter's afternoon, and the Prime Minister of Meikleburg was hard at work in his study. He was sitting in front of the fire, reading through a sheaf of papers, and he looked very cosy with his feet up on the fender. In the grate a row of nice plump chestnuts lay roasting. Close at hand stood a decanter and a box of fat cigars.

"Ah me! The cares of state!" cried the Prime Minister, as he glanced up from his work with a deep sigh. "The cares, and the anxieties! Who, I wonder, would wear himself out as I do in the public service!"

His Private Secretary, who had just tiptoed into the room with a bundle of secret documents, gave a sympathetic grunt.

"Upon my word, Prime Minister," he remarked, "you aren't looking quite yourself this evening. You ought to take a good rest, in my opinion; that's what you ought to do."

"Rest?" cried the Prime Minister irritably. "How should I of all people have time for rest, with His Majesty opening the new Session to-morrow morning as ever is? I've had the Procession to arrange, meetings to attend, all sorts of



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business to see to. Rest indeed! You're talking nonsense. Why, this very moment I'm busy running through the speech I've got to make. You don't seem to realise the responsibilities that devolve on a man in my position."

The Secretary grunted again.

"My only fear is," the Prime Minister continued, gazing morosely into the fire to see if the chestnuts were cooked, "my only fear is, that one day my health may begin to break down. That indeed would be a tragedy for the nation!"

"Oh, come!" cried the Secretary, doing his best to be a comfort.

"It's no good saying 'come' in that tone of voice," snapped the Prime Minister; "no good at all. You'd very much better go and fill up that decanter, which I see is almost empty, and leave me to get on with my speech in peace. I've a great lot of work to do to it yet, you know."

"Well, I feel sure that when it's finished it will be a great success," said the Secretary politely.

The Prime Minister gave a complacent nod.

"I read part of it at the Cabinet meeting this morning, and certainly all of them agreed it was extremely able," he remarked. "That ass von Booby cracked some of his puerile jokes, of course—but, then, that's just what one's come to expect. The man seems to take a positive delight in being rude to me. Most unpleasant! Most! Well, sir, what do you keep looking at the clock like that for, when I'm talking to you?"

"Very sorry, P.M.," said the Secretary; "but I thought you might be forgetting that you had an audience with His Majesty at six o'clock. It's a quarter to already, I see."

The Prime Minister threw his half-smoked cigar into the fire and jumped up hurriedly.

"Ah, the cares of state!" he cried. "Fetch me my

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hat and coat immediately! And my umbrella too; it's snowing outside. Yes, I remember now. I've got to tell His Majesty one or two things about the arrangements for to-morrow. That's what it is."

He hurried downstairs into the street, and started walking briskly towards the Palace. The pavements lay thick with snow, and the citizens of Meikleburg, their day's work over, were thronging home along the Königstrasse from shops and offices. Paper-boys at the street corners were calling the news. Shopkeepers were fastening up their shutters.

Soon the Prime Minister arrived at the Palace, and found the Lord Warden of the Household waiting for him at the entrance.

"King Timothy will receive you in his private cabinet," said the Lord Warden, and the Prime Minister followed him up the marble staircase, and along a wide passage hung with pictures of dead Princes and Princesses, to a gilded door. The Lord Warden knocked, and they went in.

Little King Timothy was lying on the hearthrug, busy with a jigsaw puzzle, but when the Prime Minister came in he scrambled politely to his feet.

"Your Majesty will pardon this intrusion," said the Lord Warden unctuously, "but the Prime Minister has called to see you about the opening of Parliament."

King Timothy made a face. He disliked the pompous old Prime Minister for one thing. And then he was not looking forward to opening Parliament either. All his days were so full of ceremonies, and he had no time to do the things he wanted, like playing in the garden and having friends.

"I think opening Parliament is jolly stupid!" he said boldly. "At least I shouldn't mind so much if I didn't have to dress up in all those silly clothes."

"Come, come, Your Majesty!" cried the Prime Minister,



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grasping sternly at the lapels of his coat; "I fear you do not take your responsibilities seriously enough. I detect a note of levity. The opening of Parliament is a very ancient and striking ceremonial, and it would be a great pity to do anything to deprive it of its old-world dignity. After all, Parliament is the keystone of our wonderful constitution, is it not?" He fumbled in his coat-tails, and produced a slip of paper. "Now, Your Majesty has already been informed as to the general arrangements," he said; "but there are just one or two points I should like to mention. For instance, punctually at eleven, as a kind of *apéritif* to the morning's pageantry, a meeting of Your Majesty's Cabinet Ministers will be held in the Palace. Your Majesty, according to custom, will be expected to preside."

"Your Majesty had better make a note of that," said the Lord Warden.

"Yes," said the Prime Minister. "And now here are one or two other things . . ."

For nearly half an hour he went on talking and telling King Timothy about what he had to do. The Procession was to leave the Palace sharp at five to twelve. King Timothy was to ride in the State carriage with various gentlemen-in-waiting. When he got to Parliament he was to remember not to read the Gracious Speech too fast. He was to be careful not to trip over his train—and so on, and so on.

"Well, that's all, I think," said the Prime Minister at last.

King Timothy sighed. It sounded quite enough too!

"Please, Prime Minister," he asked, "who will there be at that meeting you said at the beginning?"

"Well, there's myself, of course," replied the Prime Minister; "and then there's the Foreign Secretary, and the Finance Minister, and the Minister of Marine."



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"But won't General von Booby be coming, then?" asked King Timothy in a disappointed voice. "He's always so jolly, isn't he?"

"Ah, yes. I was forgetting him," said the Prime Minister a trifle sourly. "Yes; the Minister of War will also be attending. I may be permitted to remark in parenthesis, however, that in my view jollity is hardly a suitable frame of mind for the Council Chamber!"

They talked for a little while longer, and then King Timothy had to go and change for dinner. He walked slowly up to his dressing-room, and on the stairs he met his old nurse, Frau von Potzheim.

"Oh, Potzy," he sighed; "I've got *such* a day to-morrow! I do wish that the summer would come."

"Do you, duckie?" asked Potzy.

"Yes," said King Timothy; "I'm so tired of Processions and things, and the Prime Minister is so cross and stupid. But when the summer comes I'm going to have a holiday. They told me that. I'm going down to the country, miles away."

"Well, that *will* be nice," said Potzy.

King Timothy smiled a little and went on upstairs to his dressing-room. Outside the heavily-curtained windows the snow was still falling.

Next morning King Timothy got up early. He hurried over his breakfast, and then when he had finished he ran out into the garden to make the most of what free time he had.

By and by the Cabinet Ministers began to arrive. They carried little portfolios, and were smartly dressed in top-hats and frock-coats—all except General von Booby, that is, who came in military scarlet with a big silver star on his

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chest. They made their way upstairs to the Council Chamber one by one, and sat down solemnly round the long oak table. The Prime Minister arrived a little late, but he made up for it by looking more solemn than all the rest put together.

"Ah, the cares of state!" he cried, as he hurried in.  
"The cares, and the anxieties!"

"Well, P.M.," remarked General von Booby, rather neatly as he thought; "the important thing with you in my opinion isn't the anxieties of state, but the state of anxiety."

"Really, General!" replied the Prime Minister sharply, "I am afraid that you are not always so amusing as you seem to imagine!"

The two of them glared at each other, and the Foreign Secretary was just about to make some peaceful utterance when the door opened and King Timothy walked shyly in, rubbing his frozen fingers. The five Ministers rose respectfully and bid good-morning. Then, when King Timothy had taken his place at the head of the table, they sat down again and began to discuss their policy.

They talked about a lot of weighty matters, such as the bank rate, and colonisation, and the export of cereals; but King Timothy did not listen very much. It was so uninteresting. After a while, when his Ministers were too engrossed to notice him, he got quietly off his chair. He stole across the room to the big bow window, and gazed eagerly out at the snow-covered lawns where he had been playing earlier in the morning.

"Hi! General von Booby! Do come and look!" cried King Timothy, suddenly bursting into a fit of laughter. "There's a Cabinet Minister got loose in the garden!"

The Prime Minister, who was just in the middle of making a point, looked up in annoyance at this unexpected

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interruption. The Minister of Marine and the Finance Minister glanced at each other with raised eyebrows. General von Booby, for his part, pushed back his chair and strode to the window with an air of great seriousness.

"Well, I never did!" he cried. "His Majesty's quite right, Prime Minister. What a lark! My word, what a lark!"

Frowning, the Prime Minister hurried to von Booby's side, and the other Ministers followed inquisitively. They all crowded round the window, and what they saw when they looked out into the garden was a fine fat snow-man, with a top-hat on his head and a little portfolio in his hand. King Timothy leaned against the wall and shook with laughing.

"Allow me to congratulate your Majesty!" said General von Booby. "Its quite a work of art in my opinion."

"He's melting, I'm afraid," said King Timothy.

"Then I'm going out to make his acquaintance at once, in that case," said the General. "Will your Majesty conduct me?"

"General von Booby!" snapped the Prime Minister, "you are sometimes very difficult to tolerate. You don't seem to realise that we are in the midst of an important discussion!"

"Oh, but you must come now if you're coming," said King Timothy. "He's melting, you see."

"Come on, P.M.," said the Foreign Secretary amicably. "We'll all go and see it. It won't take a minute."

The Prime Minister shrugged his shoulders, and the whole Cabinet trooped out of the Council Chamber, down the stairs, and out into the garden. King Timothy ran on ahead.

When they came to the snow-man, General von Booby clicked his heels and saluted.



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"Who's it meant to be, Your Majesty?" he inquired. "The Prime Minister?"

"If you ask me, von Booby," interjected the Prime Minister, "it ought to be wearing a red coat and a cocked hat!"

The General drew himself stiffly up to attention.

"I've a good mind to throw a snowball at you for that!" he remarked.

"Oh, do!" cried King Timothy, quite delighted at the prospect.

A twinkle came into the General's eye. He bent down and picked up a handful of snow. He moulded it in his hands. Then, with a military roar, he flung it straight at the Prime Minister. There was a hollow thump, and the Prime Minister's hat fell off into a flower-bed.

King Timothy sat down in the snow and laughed and laughed. The Ministers in the background smiled discreetly.

"Ah, von Booby," said the Foreign Secretary with a grin; "always the old soldier I see. None of these new-fangled peace conferences for you!"

"Really, General," snorted the Prime Minister, going rather purple; "I've a damned good mind to throw a snowball at *you* for that."

"Oh, please!" cried King Timothy eagerly, "if you're going to have a fight, why not pick up sides so we can all join in?"

The Prime Minister rescued his hat from the snow, dusted it, and rammed it on his head again.

"But, Your Majesty!" he said severely, "you forget that we have important business to do. The affairs of the nation call us!"

"Oh, yes; but a *fight* wouldn't take long," pleaded King

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Timothy. The more he thought about it the more brilliant and delightful the idea appeared. "Couldn't we have just a little one—please?"

"Why not?" remarked General von Booby cheerfully; "I think it a rattling good notion. What do you other fellows think?"

The Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Marine and the Finance Minister glanced towards their Sovereign, and saw his lips trembling between eagerness and disappointment. They called to mind what they themselves had been at twelve years old, and if their hearts had been hard before they were hard no longer.

"Well, perhaps we might do something of the sort just for a few minutes," smiled the Foreign Secretary. He remembered especially an occasion, forgotten for many years, when he had thrown a snowball at his classics master with remarkable success.

"A little exercise might even do us good," added the Minister of Marine, and the Finance Minister agreed.

"For my part," said the Prime Minister, "I disapprove most strongly of the whole idea."

"Don't be such an old stick-in-the-mud!" said General von Booby. "It's really most unconstitutional, you know, to refuse to do what His Majesty asks you."

The Prime Minister looked uncomfortable at that. He had been touched on his weakest spot. The perfection of the Constitution was always his favourite theme.

"Well, if you put it like that," he said sulkily, "I suppose I have no option but to agree."

So then there were the sides to be arranged, and the General and the Prime Minister tossed for first pick. The Prime Minister lost, and that made him more sulky than ever.

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"I choose His Majesty," said the General.

King Timothy ran over to his side delightedly.

"I'll have the Finance Minister then," said the Prime Minister.

"Foreign Secretary," said the General.

"Minister of Marine then," said the Prime Minister.

General von Booby rubbed his hands.

"Very nice too," he said; "just three a side."

"But we must have some rules, mustn't we?" put in King Timothy. "It's no good fighting without rules."

"Quite right Your Majesty," said von Booby. "Now what do you say about rules, P.M.?"

"Oh, make what rules you please," replied the Prime Minister crustily.

At this there was something of an argument; but at last it was decided that five minutes should be spent making munitions, and then the battle should begin. Von Booby's side were to make their headquarters at a near-by geranium bed, while the Prime Minister's side were to defend an avenue of limes about fifty yards away.

"Well, there's generosity for you, P.M.!" said von Booby; "we've given you the trees to dodge behind, but there's no shelter for us!"

The two parties separated, and the little birds sitting in the bare snow-laden boughs wondered whatever could be going on. By the lime-tree avenue they saw three elderly gentlemen in frock-coats and top-hats set busily to work building up an arsenal of snowballs. Over by the geranium bed, a man in black, a man in scarlet, and a little boy were doing exactly the same thing. The little birds chirruped wisely to one another and decided that something exciting was afoot.

"Bet they put stones in theirs!" said King Timothy, with a knowing look towards the lime trees.



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“Nil desperandum,” replied the Foreign Secretary. “We have a great strategist on our side, which is more than can be said for them. Haven’t you thought of some artful scheme, General, to gain us the day?”

“Yes, I have, as a matter of fact,” replied von Booby modestly. “It wasn’t misplaced generosity that made me give the P.M. those trees for his headquarters. Oh dear no! It was cunning! Now, come close both of you; it’s very secret!”

The three of them gathered in a little circle, and the General explained his plans. As he listened, King Timothy’s face lighted up with glee. The Foreign Secretary also seemed very pleased with what he heard, for he plucked a geranium and stuck it in his buttonhole, crying out that that would be their emblem of victory.

But then, while they were still scheming, a shout came ringing across the garden.

“Zero hour!”

It was the Minister of Marine, and with the words he flung a huge snowball which hit the Foreign Secretary in the chest. At the same moment the Finance Minister discharged a regular volley, and the General himself only narrowly escaped being hit.

“Nemo me impune lacessit!” cried the Foreign Secretary, and therewith began such a ferocious bombardment of the enemy as it would be difficult to describe. The contest had begun, and snowballs whizzed through the air like grape-shot. The Finance Minister was struck on the shoulder, and again in the stomach. General von Booby, while he was bending down to pick up some snow, was struck twice in the small of the back. The Foreign Secretary actually had a snowball shatter itself against his ear.

“We’ll have to setup a dressing-station soon!” he remarked cheerfully.

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King Timothy, meanwhile, according to plan, was beating a fast retreat round behind the glasshouses. He was running in a wide semicircle, across lawns, through shrubberies and over flower-beds. He went cautiously, with his body doubled up, for he knew that at all costs he must not be observed.

In two or three minutes, very breathless and warm, he found himself behind the lime-tree avenue which the Prime Minister was defending. He had reached his objective. He stole softly forward, grasped one of the low-hanging boughs and swung himself up into a tree. He climbed high among the snowy branches until he was just above the spot where the Prime Minister was standing. Then, with an enormous war-whoop, he began to leap up and down. The whole tree shook, and the snow came tumbling down in cascades on the Prime Minister's head.

General von Booby, who had watched the success of his stratagem from afar, waved his hat elatedly in the air. But then, just as he was about to complete the Prime Minister's discomfort, with a well-aimed snowball, the Foreign Secretary caught his arm.

"Listen!" cried the Foreign Secretary in an agitated voice; "we're dished!"

In the distance they could hear the clock of the Parliament House striking twelve.

"Good God!" shouted von Booby. "We ought to be in our places! Come on everybody!"

The five Cabinet Ministers took to their heels like one man, and rushed helter-skelter out of the Palace garden.

Whilst all this had been going on, the deputies and distinguished visitors had been filing to their places in the Assembly Chamber of the Parliament House, and soon it was

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quite full. The galleries were packed with grand ladies, and foreign ambassadors wearing their ribbons and insignia. Down below, in the Chamber itself, everybody was squashed so tightly together on the benches that it was most uncomfortable for them. In the whole vast hall only five seats were empty, and all of these were on the front Government bench.

When twelve o'clock struck, the supporters of the Government began to look a little anxiously at one another. The seats on the front bench were still empty, and in less than ten minutes His Majesty was due to enter the chamber. The hands of the clock above the throne ticked round to ten past twelve; but still the Cabinet did not come. The Parliamentary Secretaries bustled out into the lobbies with uneasy faces. The Leader of the Opposition began to prepare a speech accusing the Government of disloyalty to the Throne and cynical indifference to the House.

Nobody knew what could possibly have happened, and by a quarter past the whole assembly had worked itself up into a very great state of excitement. Wild rumours of resignation and illness passed from mouth to mouth. But suddenly there was an absolute silence, and everyone turned towards the door. The missing Ministers had appeared. They were hurrying down the gangway to their seats.

For a few moments the general quiet continued, but then such a hubbub broke out! The Cabinet tried to look unconcerned, as though nothing was the matter; but they found it most difficult. The appearance of the Prime Minister alone would have been enough to overthrow any Government. His frock-coat and trousers were soaked with melted snow, his cravat was all awry, the top-hat in his hand was quite misshapen. The Foreign Secretary, too, presented a somewhat unusual picture, for he had a large geranium in his buttonhole. The other Ministers were equally remarkable in one way or



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another, and the Leader of the Opposition continued preparing his speech with renewed vigour.

“Well,” said everybody, as the Cabinet took their seats; “here they are at last—even if they do look as though they’d been left out in the garden all night. But now where’s His Majesty?”

The same question was being asked by the crowds that had collected outside to view the arrival of the Procession. Many of them had been waiting there since sunrise, so they were particularly annoyed that the Procession should be ten minutes late. By and by, however, a cheer went up and the State carriage, with its escort of Imperial Hussars, came into sight. It looked a very pretty cavalcade, with the white horses stepping out proudly, and the bright uniforms of the soldiers.

King Timothy, who was accompanied in the carriage by two gentlemen of the court, was smiling to right and left. When the clock had sounded twelve he had swarmed down the lime tree in a fine hurry, rather afraid that the Procession might not wait for him. But it *had* waited, and given him time to change his breeches too. So here he was, only a trifle late and so pleased with the morning’s adventures that he was not even worrying about what the Prime Minister would say to him the next time they met.

Soon the Procession came to a standstill outside the Parliament house, and a crowd of splendidly dressed functionaries came forward to help King Timothy from the carriage. They escorted him into the building, through a labyrinth of corridors, to the Robing Room. The magnificent ceremonial robes were waiting for him here, and the functionaries helped him to get them on.

A fanfare sounded, and he was led from the Robing Room again, down more corridors, to the Assembly Chamber.

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There was a second fanfare. The deputies rose respectfully to their feet. King Timothy, followed by his attendants, walked in and ascended the throne.

"Pray be seated," he murmured, as he had been told to do. He glanced over to the Ministerial benches, trying to catch the Prime Minister's eye. But the Prime Minister was staring gloomily down at the carpet. And well he might. Some of the snow from the lime-tree bough had fallen down his neck, and now it was melting, and a little puddle was forming on the floor. General von Booby looked in the direction of the throne and gave a wink.

Now a third fanfare sounded. An official handed King Timothy a scroll of parchment. The time had come for him to read the Gracious Speech. He took the scroll, unrolled it, turned it the right way up, and began. He read it very well—not too quickly and not too slowly. Although there were a number of long words—for it had been written by the Prime Minister—he made no mistakes at all. Everyone agreed that he had done most creditably, and when he had finished there was loud applause.

"That's all now, Your Majesty," whispered an official as the clapping subsided.

There was yet another fanfare, and King Timothy climbed down from the throne and left the Chamber the way that he had come. The whole ceremony had only taken two or three minutes, and the deputies were now free to settle down to the business of the day.

"I call on the Prime Minister!" cried the Speaker, ringing his bell.

The Prime Minister stood up and shivered.

"Mr. Speaker, sir," he said; "it is not without a sense of deep privilege that I rise to address the House this afternoon. The motion I have to propose is, that a humble vote of thanks

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be recorded for His Majesty's Gracious Speech, to which we have just been listening. Loyalty to the throne, and to His Majesty's person, is, it will be agreed, the foundation stone upon which this great state of ours is builded. I am glad to say that conditions have greatly improved since this time last year, and the ship of state——"

At this point there was a sound like that of a small subterranean explosion, and the deputies looked up in alarm. But there was no cause for panic; it was only that the Prime Minister had sneezed. Indeed, he sneezed again. He sneezed a third time. There was some suppressed laughter from the Opposition benches. Yet again did the Prime Minister sneeze, and this time louder than before.

The Leader of the Opposition, who, being a good Parliamentarian, never missed an opportunity of harassing the Government, jumped up and waved an accusing finger.

"Mr. Speaker, sir," he cried; "I beg to move that the Prime Minister——"

The Speaker rang his bell.

"The Leader of the Opposition will be so good as to resume his seat!" he said sternly. "The Prime Minister is in possession of the House!"

The Prime Minister, however, merely mumbled something about remarkable import statistics, and started sneezing all over again. The laughter of the Opposition swelled, and from the Ministerial benches came loud and repeated cries for order.

"Mr. Speaker, sir," cried the Leader of the Opposition, jumping up again; "I beg to move——"

But he got no further. His voice was drowned in an increasing din. Several deputies had jumped up now, and were all shouting at the same time. The Speaker was ringing his bell. The Prime Minister was sneezing.

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"On a point of order," cried half a dozen people at once.

More and more deputies sprang to their feet and added to the clamour. Those who were not actually standing up making speeches started shouting at the others to sit down. The laughter of the Opposition grew louder and more uncontrolled.

"On a point of order," yelled the excited Ministerialists.

But now the noise was tremendous. Some of the deputies, unable to make themselves heard, were supporting their points by hurling books at their particular opponents across the gangway. Some, having no books by them, had left their seats and were shaking their fists in each other's faces.

General von Booby and the Foreign Secretary got up and hurried discreetly from the Chamber.

"My word, what a lark!" shouted von Booby in the Foreign Secretary's ear when they got outside. "I do wish King Timothy was here to see!"

Later that afternoon, in the music-room in the West Wing of the Palace, a dancing lesson was in progress. Monsieur Lavissee, the Royal Dancing Master, stood by the fireplace, twirling his splendid black moustaches with rhythmic emphasis. Across the floor, his arms wearily embracing an imaginary partner, his eyes gazing down mistrustfully at his two small feet, glided King Timothy.

"Now then!" cried Monsieur Lavissee excitedly: "One-two-three, *rum-tum-tum*, *step-to-the-right*, *step-to-the-left*! *Point-the-toes*, *tum-tum-tum*, *now-to-the-right*, *and-to-the-left*!"

His shrill voice echoed right down the adjoining corridors, and in the music-room itself the chandeliers quivered. King Timothy pirouetted in a corner and started back across the floor again. Every now and then he lifted up his eyes to glance hopefully at the big ormolu clock on the mantelpiece, to see how far the minute hand had crept.



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"Oh, Monsieur Lavisse," he cried mournfully, coming to a sudden standstill; "can't we stop now? Haven't I had enough lesson for one day?"

"Why, there's another ten minutes!" replied Monsieur Lavisse sharply. "Now, then! Now then! *One-two-three, one-two-three, step-to-the-right, and-to-the-left.*"

King Timothy began dancing again, but at last the clock on the mantelpiece struck the hour, and Monsieur Lavisse clapped his hands.

"Our time is now up," he announced, "and I shall take my leave. Your Majesty is getting along very nicely, if I may say so. If only Your Majesty would point the toes I should have little fault to find. Well, we shall return to the matter next week. Good-evening, Your Majesty! Good-evening!"

Then, giving a final twirl to his moustaches, the Royal Dancing Master bowed himself out of the room.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed King Timothy loudly, half hoping that Monsieur Lavisse would hear him, and half hoping that he wouldn't. "I do think that dancing lessons are a jolly stupid waste of time!"

He waited for a moment, and then ran downstairs and out into the garden, to say good-evening to the snow-man. But poor snow-man! It had been a sunny afternoon, and when King Timothy reached the spot where he had stood, there was nothing but a shapeless pile of snow.

King Timothy gazed at the ruin musingly.

"I think that you must have been the Prime Minister after all," he said. "I think you must have been."

On the lawns, too, the snow had melted, and big green patches of grass were showing through, like islands in a frozen sea. Light was fading; the rooks were gathering in the trees. Up in the frosty sky the evening star came out. It looked down, and gave a wink.

VINCENT SHEEAN

# *Romance and Revolution*

## *II*

### I

I WAS not, to begin with, a "sympathiser" in Hankow. It was part of the middle-class dilettante view of life that I had half adopted to accept experience of this kind much as the translated experiences of art (a play or a poem) are accepted, and to value them, what is more, as separate parts of a continuous process of education. To the dilettante the Chinese Revolution might have been of interest as an exciting spectacle, like a new ballet of Diaghileff's, and of value as a contribution to his own education, like the acquirement of a new language. By 1927, after constant exposure to the atmosphere of London and Paris, such ways of receiving experience, although not natural to me, had ceased to be altogether alien, and it was in some such frame of mind as that of your plain seeker-after-curiosity that I first went to Hankow.

There were, however, important differences. One—and a very curious one, at that—was the rapidity with which the purely intellectual and sensational dilettantism of Paris and

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London slipped away from me the moment I abandoned its geographical centres of influence. Something of the frame of mind (the view of experience) did remain, but the attitudes, tastes, even the vocabulary and the manners, evaporated as soon as I got on a boat. The point is, it seems to me, rather important, and indicates a characteristic of the time which was not peculiar to me alone. Paris and London appeared to have a powerful dilettante influence on a whole *levée* of young people, of all nations, who came to maturity in the years just after the war. The influence was partly through intimidation: the dictators of taste, of ideas, of manners, were older and wiser, presumably, than we, and they spoke, almost professionally, for what is called "youth." The "youth" of Paris and London (in fact already middle-aged) pursued novelty, admired innovation no matter what form it happened to take, and indulged in all the rapid changes to which dilettante taste is forced to fly to maintain its high temperature. But if my own course of development is at all typical,—and subsequent political and social movements indicate that it must have been at least rather usual,—the youth of the 1920's actually wanted a more direct experience of reality, at whatever cost in violence or discomfort, than was to be found in the fanciful, nervous art and ideas of the period. The desire, to which I have referred more than once, for a sense of relationship to the world system could never be satisfied with a society in which art, life, and manners were regulated by caprice.

To Hankow, then, I brought the mind and character of an American bourgeois, twenty-seven years old, who had divided his adult years between actual events—the living history of the time—and the preoccupations of personal taste. In these preoccupations, which had assumed greater importance in the last two years, influences of a powerful order had

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deflected what must originally have been a nature of considerable vigour and simplicity into channels where it was not wholly at ease. The character of the American bourgeois—let us call him Mr. X.—had been tinged with the colour of his surroundings, had taken on some of the flavour of Paris and London, and disengaged, no doubt, a light aroma of decay. The American character is not made to withstand, over long periods of time, the influence of older cultures in their most self-conscious and virulent forms. Our Mr. X. was almost—and could, in time, have become—a dilettante. That is, he already possessed by nature, and had fertilised by experience, those tastes by which a man could live through sensation alone. Books, pictures, music, and the satisfaction of physical appetites constituted this world of sensation, and although it had always existed in some degree for our Mr. X., as it exists for everybody,—it had only recently shown signs of taking over the whole of his life.

He was preserved, then and afterwards, from this fate. Aside from any possible reasons that might be sought in deeper regions of the personality, he was preserved by two rather obvious circumstances. The first was that he had no money at all except what he could earn. The second was that independently of the first, he wanted (why, God alone knows) to “write”—that is, to put into words whatever he could learn about the mysterious transaction of living. His attitude towards work was neither consistent nor serious; he was capable of writing the most undisguised “piffle” to make money when he needed it; but he did possess, at the core, a determination to do some little work of which he need not be ashamed before he was finished. These two circumstances fought against the world of sensation at every point. A man who has to earn his living cannot spend his whole time, or even much of it, in pursuit of the experiences in art



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and life that might yield sensation; and a man who wants to do good work at some time or other can only learn how to do it by working.

The second circumstance was, of course, the really powerful combatant. Money, in the world in which Mr. X. lived, could be come by in various ways. For instance, it was not wholly impossible (however unlikely) that somebody might die and leave him a million dollars. But even with a million dollars in pocket and all the pleasures of the world at hand for the taking, he would still have been harassed by the thought that his time, the most precious and the most precarious of his possessions, evaporated with terrifying speed; that he had done nothing with it, was doing nothing with it; and that he must learn how to light the light before darkness descended.

Mr. X. was thus, through no effort of his own, and indeed almost automatically, protected against the worst results of his own laziness and self-indulgence. But he was lazy and self-indulgent just the same. He preferred the line of least resistance, avoided conclusions that might be troublesome to himself, and was tending, more and more, to treat the whole of the visible universe as a kind of catering firm employed in his service. The mind he directed upon people and things in China, and upon the whole drama of revolution, had been originally a good one, acquisitive, perceptive, retentive, but it was softened and discoloured beneath later influences, which constantly suggested that fundamental questions were not worth bothering about. The shock of general reality was what he needed, and he was about to receive it—a seismic disturbance of greater intensity and duration than he would have believed possible a few months before.

So much for Mr. X.—tiresome fellow !

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### II

Misselwitz of the *New York Times* was staying at the American Consulate.

"One thing you ought to do right away," he said, "is to go and see Mrs. Prohme."

"Who's that?"

"You know—you must have heard something about her. Red-headed gal, spitfire, mad as a hatter, complete Bolshevik. Works for Borodin."

"Oh, yes, I remember. Somebody told me about her. American."

"Yeah—American. But I don't know if she still has a passport. There was some talk about her giving up her nationality. You can't pay any attention to what she says,—she's the wildest Bolshevik in town,—but she's a nice girl, anyway, and you'll enjoy talking to her. I kid her along all the time, but she doesn't seem to mind. She can laugh, anyway, and that's more than most of these people can do."

"O.K., let's go and see her now."

This conversation must have taken place early in May, soon after my arrival in Hankow; but it was so casual, and led to an event of such seeming inconsequence, that it was not even mentioned in my day-book. I remember it, however, far better than I do many of the circumstances that seemed worthy of careful recording. Misselwitz—"Missi"—led the way down a shaded side street in the Concession to a low building that served as the editorial office of the *People's Tribune*, the official newspaper of the Hankow government. It appeared in two daily editions, one in Chinese and one in English, and I had already had the pleasure of reading some copies of it.

"Bill Prohme, her husband," Missi went on, "is another wild one—gets excited and shouts at you. He's in Shanghai

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now, I think. Fine Bolshevik pair. You ought to hear the way the navy people talk about 'em ! ”

“ Are they Communists, do you mean ? ”

“ Oh, sure—must be. Of course they say they're not, but you can tell. Everybody that's got anything to do with this government is a Red, whether they admit it or not.”

We reached the office just as Mrs. Prohme was coming out, and she stopped to talk to us on the step.

“ Hello, Missi,” she said, laughing at him, “ what's the matter now ? More outrages to report ? ”

“ Oh, no,” he said. “ We just came round to get a little dose of propaganda. Any news ? ”

He introduced me, and we walked down the street with her. She was on her way home to dinner, and it was neither the time nor the place for any kind of serious conversation. She was slight, not very tall, with short red-gold hair and a frivolous, turned-up nose. Her eyes were of the kind the anthropologists call “ mixed,” and could actually change colour with the changes of light, or even with changes of mood. Her voice, fresh, cool, and very American, sounded as if it had secret rivulets of laughter running underneath it all the time, ready to come to the surface without warning. All in all, she was most unlike my idea of a “ wild Bolshevik,” and I told her so. She laughed. I had never heard anybody laugh as she did—it was the gayest, most unself-conscious sound in the world. You might have thought that it did not come from a person at all, but from some impulse of gaiety in the air.

“ You've been listening to Missi,” she said. “ Don't believe anything Missi says about us. He thinks everybody in Hankow eats bourgeois babies for breakfast. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure what people mean when they say ‘ Bolshevik ’ in this place. It seems to me a Bolshevik

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is anybody that doesn't want to make coolies out of the Chinese."

"That's true enough," said I. "In Shanghai they all thought I was a Bolshevik because I talked to some Chinese, and went to Nanking."

She inspected me for the first time with sudden gravity—the kind of gravity in which there lurks a faint suggestion of suppressed laughter. I was shaved within an inch of my life, and was dressed in the white uniform of the foreigner in China.

"No," she said soberly, "you flatter yourself. I don't believe anybody could possibly think that you were a Bolshevik."

"You ought to be glad I'm not," said I. "If I were I couldn't get anything printed in an American paper about your revolution, and as it is, I do."

"I know," she said, reflectively. "You're what they call 'fair to both sides.' You sit on the fence and say, 'On the other hand.' How's the weather up there? Is it a nice fence?"

"It's comfortable," I said, "and I get a good view. How do you like it down there where you are? You don't see much, do you?"

"Oh, I'm all right," she said. "I can see over the fence if I try hard. But it's more interesting down here where the stuff is growing. I don't care about the view, anyway; I've seen it."

### III

This kind of sparring was not uncharacteristic of our talk even when I knew her much better. In the beginning of our acquaintance it was almost inevitable, for she could see at a glance all that I have been at such pains to explain in the preceding section—the character of Mr. X., the bourgeois



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as modified by Paris and London, with a goodish but lazy mind. She could see it at once, not only because it was to some degree apparent to anybody, but because her acquaintance with the original material of the character was so exact and complete that its discolorations and the subsequent shapes to which it had conformed became immediately obvious. She could easily, perhaps too easily, consign me to the pigeon-hole where many of her own friends and relations belonged. She was from Chicago, had been educated at the University of Illinois, and must have known hundreds of our contemporaries of the same general social, economic, and intellectual stamp as myself. Her instinctive attack or defence took the form of a quizzical flippancy, as it might with a contemporary (a brother or friend) known years ago in Illinois, who had, since the days of remembered acquaintance, gone off in an opposing direction and acquired a set of ideas that she could now regard as idiosyncratic.

Exactly the same thing was true, of course, on my side of the argument. She was the kind of girl I had known all my life, but she had, by the direction she had taken, acquired a purpose and point of view that did not seem to me to belong to her. From the first I was conscious of a great puzzle, the puzzle of why she was doing this particular thing at the particular point of the world's compass. The easiest suggestion for a solution was that she was a romantic idealist, to whom a "cause" was a necessity—any cause. Nobody, after one glance at her, could have supposed her to be animated by ordinary selfish reasons. Her sincerity floated over her like a banner. The hunger for a cause—that was it: the kind of thing that made so many nice American girls go out and get themselves cracked over the head by policemen during the suffragist campaigns. Some of the same nice girls, now that they had the vote, were busy with other

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causes, getting prohibition either repealed or enforced, getting prisons reformed, or organising the local ball for charity in their own home town. It must have taken a peculiarly insatiable cause-hunger to bring a girl like this into the exact middle of the Chinese Revolution, but except for the difference in degree, it was the same motive as that which caused ladies to spend a day or two in the suffrage jail in Washington and then come out and write books with titles like "Jailed for Freedom." Perhaps Mrs. Prohme, too, would write a book about her work in China—an excited volume in large print, with pictures, called "Up from Canton" or "China in Travail."

These assumptions, however frivolous,—and nobody knows better than I how grotesquely frivolous they were,—controlled my mind in the earlier stages of our acquaintance, and had their complement in similar assumptions on her part. She had, in a sort of way, "known me all her life"; not only that, but I was an American newspaper man from Paris (that is, the worst kind), and she could not take me seriously. She was obliged to assume, from what experience had taught her, that it was useless to expect a rational and unshrinking examination of any subject from such a person as myself. Neither of us was willing, therefore, to risk an attempt at discussion of the central reality towards which we were both unescapably magnetised: she because she already knew, or thought she knew, where it was, and did not believe me capable of the drastic enterprise of reaching it; I because I was profoundly uncertain, and did not realise that the obscure necessity was felt in the same way by anybody else. There was a basis of perfect and complete misunderstanding, with a superstructure of familiarity (sameness of culture, social and economic identity, Illinois, Illinois!); and as a result we could only throw our whole relationship into a key of casual

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but sustained flippancy. Sometimes the flippancy wore thin, but it seldom broke down altogether. The most important conversation in my life—in the true sense, the only conversation I have ever had—began, and for months continued, as a kind of joke.

### IV

There remains to this day a huge body of opinion that misunderstands altogether the situation of the Chinese Revolution. To this body of opinion, chronically theoretical and almost romantic, the Chinese Revolution seems always to have been an ideal quantity. Trotsky, Radek, and many of the Russians thought it was a beautiful example of their own theories, and were disappointed when it did not take the course indicated by them; the missionaries, the British and American Liberals, and in a general way the high-minded idealists of the world, thought it was a great national movement of the traditional nineteenth-century type, to which they owed support but not comprehension. The Liberals in general hoped that the tendencies represented by Hankow and Nanking—in reality exact opposites—might combine for the benefit of a peaceful, united, and strong China. That this peaceful, united, and strong China was a chimæra did not keep them from cherishing the notion, and, as is usual with Liberals, they allowed the wish to father a good many of their thoughts. They were talking about “united China” in glowing accents at a time when twelve separate independent governments existed in the territory shown on standard maps as belonging to the Chinese Republic.

It may be worth while to tabulate these governments for the sake of precision, and to show how foolish the talk of “united China” was and is under the war-lord system. The twelve were: Yunnan, Szechuen, Sinkiang, Kweichow (all four remote and completely independent provinces),

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Honan (ruled by Feng Yu-hsiang), Shansi (ruled by Yen Hsi-shan), the countries of Tibet and Mongolia, which had been used to their independence for so many years that they no longer considered themselves parts of China, and the more pretentious governments established in Peking, Nanking, Hankow, and Canton. To these a thirteenth, Manchuria, might be added, for the Manchurian provinces were administered as a separate territory under the disguised tutelage of the Japanese. Some other provinces acknowledged special foreign influences; thus Shantung gave a special position to the Japanese, and Yunnan to the French. A freakish type of government, without a legal name or a parallel in other countries, was set up by the foreign concessions in the Yangtze River cities, in Tientsin, and the Peking Legation Quarter. There were also a number of military and naval strongholds that belonged outright to the foreigners—Hongkong to the British, Kowloon to the French, Kiaochow to the Japanese. And—the final absurdity—every inch of ground, every stick and stone to which a foreigner could possibly lay claim in any part of China, was foreign soil, to be treated exactly as if it were a little bit of France, England, or the United States, miraculously transported through the air and dumped down in the midst of the Chinese.

Weakened, divided, half colonised and overborne by the foreigner, China could not be regarded as an independent country, and was not so regarded by anybody but the purely theoretical idealists. Practical men, whether they worked for the Standard Oil Company or for the Chinese Communists, had to recognise the fact that the huge territory called China on the maps was in reality a hotchpotch of colonies, protectorates, autonomous feudal states, and principalities, in which no step could be taken without consulting the special local forms of a general disease defined in the



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language of Sun Yat-sen as "foreign imperialism." In the unutterable confusion to which Chinese political life had been reduced by the quarrels of the military leaders from 1911 to 1927, one element alone was stable : the power, wealth, greed, and susceptibility of the foreigner. And the greatest stronghold of the foreigner, the channel of his wealth and the high-road of his power, was the fatal Yangtze-kiang.

I have presented this analysis of the revolutionary situation at Hankow in 1927 as my own, and have no desire to dodge responsibility for it; the facts do not seem to me to yield any other analysis. Subsequent events have proved that the view here put forward, in which the struggle between the revolution (represented by Hankow) and the counter-revolution (represented by Nanking) is seen as a fundamental antagonism, was the correct view. When the Hankow government was destroyed, the elements it represented "went underground," as revolutionists say, only to emerge again, tough and obstinate, in the various Communist and quasi-Communist movements that have attacked Nanking ever since. The Red China of which Hankow symbolised the hope was not strong enough to come into being in 1927 against the combined forces of Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolution and the foreign navies, but it was too strong to be permanently crushed. If an historical parallel to the Chinese Revolution in 1927 must be sought, it can be found not where Trotsky and Radek strove to place it, in the Russian Revolution of 1917,—and certainly not where American missionary and Liberal opinion strove to place it, in the American Revolution of 1776,—but in a far more suggestive episode of Red hope and defeat, the Russian Revolution of 1905.

## V

The analysis, I say, is mine; but it also happens to coincide at many points with the view taken by Borodin, and it would

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be ridiculous to deny that Borodin's cool, unhurried mind shed light on a good many subjects for me. I saw him frequently in Hankow. As I knew him better, and overcame the feelings of insignificance and frivolity that had originally oppressed me in his presence, I was able to discuss anything with him. Later on, when he was sick in bed with a serious attack of malaria, I used to go to see him every day; and although the conversation during these visits ranged over a wide field, involving many subjects that had nothing to do with the Chinese Revolution, the intellectual resources he displayed were at all times those of a trained Bolshevik—his cast of mind was Leninist. Whether he was discussing a new book (*Elmer Gantry* was one that aroused his interest just then) or an old political theory, reminiscing or analysing, telling a story or advancing a hypothesis, he took "the long view." I had never before examined such a mind at close quarters, and there is no doubt that I was profoundly impressed by its clarity and consistency.

But I do not believe that the influence of Borodin shaped any of my opinions; I was too old and too independent to accept other people's ideas about phenomena that I could easily observe for myself. What did happen was something a little more complicated. In Borodin I found an older, better disciplined, better trained, and more experienced intelligence than my own: it had already traversed regions that still lay before me. Sometimes Borodin was able to disentangle a principle from the confusion of external events and show it to me; sometimes he was able to point out an historical direction or a prevailing tendency. He never made the slightest attempt to impose his opinions—often, indeed, he talked as if I were not in the room. He was concerned with the truth, and his object in conversation was to extract and demonstrate it. If, therefore, I found every

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conversation with him illuminating, and approached, in the end, more nearly to his view of the Chinese Revolution than to any other, it was not because of any personal influence he exercised, but because the truth, for me, lay on his side.

The Chinese revolutionists impressed me often by their self-abnegation, their willingness to endure and to persevere, their loyalty to ideas that meant life to China even though they might mean death to the individual. But no single Chinese revolutionist ever set my mind on new paths, as I believe Borodin did. One reason was that I never met the intellectual leaders of the Chinese Revolution. Sun Yat-sen died three years before I went to China, and his written works seemed to me to lack logic—to lack, above all, a genuinely long view. He was perhaps too deep in the battle to be able to see it as a whole, and until the end of his life he appeared to believe in a number of uneconomic and illogical propositions (industrialisation without class warfare, for instance). The other great revolutionist of modern China, Li Ta-chao, founder and head of the Chinese Communist Party, was strangled to death by the reactionaries in Peking before I had been in China a month. The leaders I did know all professed to follow the teachings either of Sun Yat-sen or of Li Ta-chao, with, occasionally, a Confucian or Christian coloration. Some of them were admirable in character, like Madame Sun Yat-sen; others were striking or picturesque, like Wang Ching-wei, the type of the fiery, romantic revolutionary; still others engaged my personal liking and respect, like T. V. Soong; but it happened that I never met a Chinese intellectual who could put his view of history into terms of absolute truth as Borodin did.

Even so, it was not Borodin alone, but the Chinese Revolution with Borodin as its interpreter, that gave me my first

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perception of the spirit of revolution in general. Borodin alone, talking in a vacuum, would have been merely a Communist intellectual. It was in his relation to the whole mass movement in China, the immense and complicated disturbance of which he was temporarily both the directing genius and the interpreter, that he acquired grandeur. His calm may have been a native characteristic, but it seemed singularly noble in the midst of confusion and danger; his political theory may have been as simple as geometry (they taught it, after all, at the Lenin Institute in Moscow), but it seemed profound and irrefragable when it was seen to support the weight of otherwise meaningless events. He exemplified in his own person, and pointed out in the phenomena around him, the peculiar qualities of intellectual consistency, social philosophy, selflessness, and determination that combine to form something I have called (for lack of a more exact term) the revolutionary spirit.

That spirit was abroad in Hankow from the time the Cantonese armies entered the city until the collapse of the revolutionary government on July 5. It was to be seen in Chinese and Russians, Left Kuomintang organisers and Communists, workmen, students, and agitators—not in all of them, of course, but in a large enough number to confirm the existence of something new in the confusion of China. There were Communist students, sometimes of rich or at least prosperous families, who became coolies so as to be able to organise the coolies for revolution. There were educated Chinese girls who risked death in the effort to tell the workers and peasants who their real enemies were. One of these girls—we all knew her in Hankow—was disembowelled by Chiang Kai-shek's soldiers on June 21 in Hangchow for saying that the Nanking war lord did not represent the party or principles of Sun Yat-sen. Her intestines were



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taken out and wrapped around her body while she was still alive. Girls and boys were beheaded for saying what they believed; men were hung up in wooden cages to die of hunger and thirst, or were broken on the rack. Little Phyllis Li, the seventeen-year-old daughter of the hero Li Ta-chao, was tortured by Chang Tso-lin's men for three days and three nights before they mercifully strangled her, and in the whole time she told them nothing.

The horrors of the counter-revolution were not unexpected: these young Chinese knew what awaited them, and went ahead just the same. Their faith in revolution as the only possible hope for China was so complete that they were willing to die a hundred deaths in its service. At a time when Chiang Kai-shek was butchering the Left Kuomintang and Communist organisers throughout his domain, the volunteers at Hankow who wanted to go and agitate among the war lord's subjects were more than the labour committees could use. The impulse that made such revolutionists offer their lives for the cause was not a suicidal, neurotic yearning for Nirvana, as it might have been in similar crises in India or Japan. Such varieties of mystic ardour were, so far as I ever saw or heard, unknown to China. The Chinese operated on a colder and purer conviction, the belief that courageous sacrifice in the service of an idea was the best means of propagating that idea among those who still refused to believe. The individual was, as so often in China, sacrificed to the race, and the young men and girls died for generations unborn.

## VI

The ardent but impersonal devotion to which I have applied the name "revolutionary spirit" was apparent in many characters and incidents in Hankow, and I have named only a few of them. There was one other, more important

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to me, as it turned out, than all the rest, a more significant and memorable example of that spirit than any in my experience. I mean Rayna Prohme.

The flippancy in which our acquaintance had begun continued for weeks, but before long I began to have an uneasy feeling that my judgment of her character had been ludicrously inaccurate. I made a number of small discoveries that shook my first ideas. She had no enthusiasm for causes in general, had never been the kind of romantical busybody I had at first assumed her to be. She had had a sound education in economics and sociology; her interest in social revolution had been aroused at an age when I was still learning new steps in the fox-trot. She had already acquired a rather remarkable revolutionary past in the service of the Kuomintang, and she enjoyed, in the spring of 1927, the confidence of a large number of Chinese Left leaders. She not only edited the official newspaper, but had a general consultative usefulness to the Hankow régime in matters of propaganda designed to appeal to foreigners. Borodin, Madame Sun Yat-sen, Eugene Chen, and Sun Fo treated her opinions with respect. I still could not quite take her seriously as a revolutionist,—it was like expecting me to believe my cousin Cecilia, with whom I grew up, had suddenly turned into a Red,—but I had to concede that this revolutionary phase, however temporary it might be, was an interesting and unexpected development in the character of a charming American girl.

I fell into the habit of going to see her every day, and as I knew her better I came to depend heavily on that daily visit for many things—not only, that is, for the pleasure of conversation with somebody who so thoroughly spoke my own language, and not only for the delight of her high spirits, the refreshment of her laughter, but also for the daily necessities of my job as a journalist to learn the news and to learn, as far

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as possible, what the news meant. For a peculiarity of Rayna Prohme's, as I found out, was her ingrained dislike of lying. She was a very bad liar indeed, and although it was often a part of her duty to make things appear under a somewhat artificial light, her natural candour was such that she did not succeed in doing so—at least with me. I could always tell when she was saying something she did not herself believe; her looks gave her away. She took her instructions from Borodin and Chen, of course, and although Borodin had a high respect for the truth, and avoided deviations from it as scrupulously as anybody I have ever known in public life, the same could never have been said of Mr. Chen. Consequently, for propaganda purposes, Rayna Prohme was often obliged to write and say things her own candour resented. The official newspaper contained these statements, but she could never make them convincingly enough in conversation. After a bit she gave up attempting to give me official versions of anything, and either told the plain truth or else confessed, with a wry smile, that she could say nothing. It was no small thing, in a place like Hankow and a profession like mine, to know somebody in whom I could believe without reserve.

Bill Prohme, her husband, returned to Hankow after I had been there a week or so, but we did not hit it off as well as might have been expected. His violent revolutionary enthusiasm resented my bourgeois lethargy, my innumerable changes of white silk clothes, my Scotch whiskey and Egyptian cigarettes. In turn I disliked his excitability, his incapacity to argue any subject through in a calm and logical manner; I suspected that his revolutionary convictions were not sufficiently grounded in economic and social science—that he was an emotional Red, if a Red at all; and that his presence in China in his present rôle was due to the accident of his marriage to Rayna Prohme. Partly for these reasons, and

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partly because his absences and illnesses made our meetings rather infrequent, I never knew him well in Hankow. It was only long after I had left China and Russia that I learned to respect his intelligence and value his friendship. During the period with which this narrative deals, he was a rather shadowy figure to me, and his name does not appear anywhere in the notes I put into my useful day-book.

Bill's resentment of the visiting bourgeois was eclipsed by that of Rayna's assistant, Mrs. Mitchell, an American woman journalist who regarded every moment I spent in the office of the *People's Tribune* as a calamity. Under these circumstances a more sensitive subject might have stayed away, but I didn't. The daily conversations with Rayna Prohme had become such a necessity that when a day passed without my seeing her at all (as happened twice when she was ill), it left an extraordinary feeling of blankness and *malaise*. This being so, it is strange to remember, and stranger still to record, that I never understood her importance to me until months later. I was as stupid as Monsieur Jourdain with his prose; I had already passed under the most powerful and significant personal influence to which I have ever been subjected, but I did not know it.

## VII

Hankow, then,—to sum up,—was a marvellous revolutionary spectacle, in which the courage and devotion of the Chinese agitators, the skill of the Russians, the high hope and frenzied determination of the workers, and the individual splendour of characters like those of Madame Sun Yat-sen, Borodin, and Rayna Prohme, combined to give me a glimpse into a new world. In its spirit, at least, if not in its accomplishment, it was the world of Lenin. That the dead bones of economics and sociology could be animated with such thrilling and irresistible life was something I would never



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have believed six months before in Paris, when the principal event of the century had seemed to be the anniversary performances of *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Opéra-Comique.

But although this glimpse into the world of Lenin did supply an almost electrical thrill, and the characters of the spectacle aroused my sincerest admiration, I still did not surrender to the logic of their being. It seemed to me that the whole revolutionary system of thought reposed upon a number of assumptions that defied proof. This became very apparent when the fundamental question of revolution was put into the form of a simple syllogism, like this :

A controlled egalitarian economy is desirable;

Revolution is the way to obtain a controlled egalitarian economy;

Therefore Revolution is desirable.

The only part of such a syllogism that needed no defence was the major term, "desirable." The major premise, although probable enough, could not possibly be proved because models for a controlled egalitarian economy did not exist, even in Russia. The minor premise was equally shaky; it might be true or not, but it was not susceptible of proof. The conclusion, therefore, had to be taken on faith, or (at best) as the result of two probabilities.

The logic of revolution can be put into other and more persuasive syllogisms than this; indeed, at a later time, Rayna Prohme and I used to spend hours trying to get the fundamental question into its barest and simplest terms; but during the Hankow period the syllogism I have given seemed to me the correct one, and no matter how much my sympathy and admiration were engaged on the side of the revolutionaries, I could not share their conviction. As I have said, the one indisputable thing was the major term "desirable"—something was desirable, something was certainly desirable

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in a world of misrule; something that could bring order out of chaos had to be found if the human race was to justify its pretence of intelligence. But whether or no the desirable something was revolution did not seem to me susceptible of proof, and the revolutionary spectacles that moved me most deeply were still only that and nothing more.

GEORGE MANNING-SANDERS

## *An Island Wedding*

THERE was to be a wedding on the lonely island of St. Issey, the first in sixty years. Nancy, the handsome daughter of Reuben Treworth, was going to be married a week before Christmas, and because Nancy was an only daughter and Reuben was as an uncrowned king, both in his farm and outside of it, he had decreed that Nancy should be married on the island.

"But there's no church," said Nancy, who had been looking forward to a grand ceremony on the larger neighbouring island of St. Peter's, where the town was.

"There's the chapel," said Reuben.

"A little old mouldy place like that!"

"If it's good enough to worship in, it's good enough to be married in," retorted Reuben.

"There's no proper clergyman," persisted Nancy.

"Mr. Timms can come, same as he does every other Sunday for service."

"That shabby little scrub!" Nancy was young, only twenty: she went, moist-eyed, to her mother, an apple-cheeked woman, who had been born on the mainland in a village just vaguely discernible from the island on exception-

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ally fine days. Mrs. Treworth heard the girl's complaint, comforted her, and promised to talk Reuben over. "For if anyone can cure him of his headstrong whims it's me," she said, boastfully.

That same night, after she had flattered Reuben sufficiently to bring him to a good temper, she put Nancy's case to him. "It's not as if she was marrying just anybody," said she; "Henry Green is a good match and his people away in London would expect everything to be done very nice."

"And so everything shall be done very nice," said Reuben energetically. "This job I'm planning will be a rare romantic. The young man fell in with our Nancy when he came holidaying on the island, so what could be more fitty than his marrying her here?"

For a moment Mrs. Treworth was caught by the novelty of the idea, but remembering Nancy's anxious face, she said: "There's only a path from our place to chapel, they'd have to go on foot and that would be more like a funeral than a wedding."

"I'll make the path wider."

"There's no carriages on the island."

"I'll get over that."

"Suppose it comes on to blow hard and Henry not able to get across?"

Reuben looked momentarily disconcerted. "There are ways of getting round everything."

Mrs. Treworth, noting her husband's hesitation and pushing her slight advantage, said: "And suppose all goes right and they are married up on this island and then of a sudden a great storm rises to hinder them from going away on their honeymoon?"

"Well, what about that?" snapped Reuben.



"Then Nancy would be put to shame," said Mrs. Treworth vaguely.

The argument continued, but with less and less chance of success for the wife. As her husband's mouth hardened, her mouth drooped and quivered.

"I've made up my mind once for all," said Reuben at last. "There's too much of this capering all over the world. The maid was born, reared and courted on this island and here she shall be married."

The wedding was to take place a week before Christmas, because that was the slackest time of the year on the flower farm. Reuben had two months in which to make the necessary arrangements, but though this seemed ample, yet he soon found there was more to do than he had bargained for. The dingy little chapel must have its walls scraped and whitewashed. The rough landing-stage, a mere collection of flat stones jutting out into the sea, must have the spaces between the stones filled to make it safe for the wedding guests' arrival. The deeply-rutted cart track from the farm to the landing-stage, though quite suitable for the conveyance of boxes of flowers, was not suitable for a wedding party. Then there was also the footpath from the farm to the chapel to be made wider for the passage of wheels. All these defects could be righted by labour.

There were no vehicles on the island except a few tumble-down donkey-carts and the three strong but clumsy four-wheeled waggons, weatherbeaten and paintless, which were used on the land. Reuben standing one morning to regard these battered waggons had an idea. He would have them mended and painted bright colours—green, blue, red, yellow, the wheels of one colour, the bodies of another colour, the shafts of still another colour to make them like triumphal chariots of old. Planks lashed from side to side of the

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waggon would provide ample sitting accommodation for the wedding party—all the islanders and a few visitors besides. The six heavy-footed farm horses should be used, two in each waggon. That afternoon Reuben began to overhaul the horses' harness. The next day he clattered at the waggons with hammer and nails. The next day he was daubing the wheels yellow, red, blue.

Nancy came, hands on hips, to watch, her eyes blazing indignation. She went back and said to her mother, "Father is making me into a show."

"Never mind, he'll soon tire of it," said Mrs. Treworth, "and then you can go to church in St. Peter's Town or across to the mainland, same as I wanted at first, and have cars and rice and everything."

But Reuben did not tire, indeed he became more enthusiastic as he surmounted each difficulty. He did not do any work in his fields, he was all day long labouring to perfect the arrangements for the wedding and countering the opposition of his family.

To Nancy, when she protested, he said blandly: "You'll be proud and glad by and by that you listened to my advice."

To his wife, when she found a real flaw in the arrangements, he said: "I'm glad you brought that up, now I'll be able to right it."

Three old men were accustomed to sit on a bench outside the whitewashed post office, on the sheltered side of the island where, on a reach of sand, a few boats were pulled up fronting a few cottages. The only telephone on the island was in the post office. Reuben came there frequently to ring up St. Peter's Town, ordering expansively, velvets, silks, blue and gold georgette and all manner of fabrics required for Nancy's trousseau.

One of the three old men, who was a socialist and an

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atheist, said to Reuben, "The job is too pompshious, master. The last to be joined up on this island was my own sister, and she and her man just wrote their names on a bit of paper. This chapel and Mr. Timms and the guzzling of food is just so much show off. Better fit the money was handed to the poor."

Reuben then for the first time explained that every man, woman and child was to be present at the wedding and feast afterwards at the farm.

"That's a bit more like it," said the atheist, smacking his lips.

The other two old men waved their gnarled sticks and crowed delightedly. Straightway they all three hobbled from door to door with the glad news. They talked of nothing else and were prolific with their costly and impracticable suggestions.

"By rights there should be a fiddler to play jigs," said the atheist.

Reuben was struck with the idea; there were two concertina players on the island, but no fiddler. "I'll hire Sandy to come across from St. Peter's," he said.

Thus encouraged the atheist continued: "And if all things were as they should be, there'd be a plenty of strong drink."

Reuben frowned at this, he was a lifelong teetotaller. "No," he said sternly, "happiness must come from the heart and not from the belly."

"Why not both, master?" queried the atheist, but got no hearing.

Mrs. Treworth flung up her hands when she heard that Sandy from St. Peter's Town was to fiddle at the wedding. "That man," said she; "why, he's a bad character!"

"So that his playing is good, that's all I care," said Reuben valiantly.

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Reuben went across to St. Peter's Town to interview the fiddler and arrange that he should come over with the rest of the party on the wedding morning; also he gave an extensive and deliberate order to a provision merchant for hams, tins of tongue, tins of fruit, cheese, fancy bread—all sorts of delicacies. In all the shops of the little town he boasted about the grand wedding.

"By rights you ought to have it photoed," said a chemist, who was also a photographer.

"Why, of course," shouted Reuben jovially, "and you'd best come across with the wedding party and bring your gear, to snap 'em off in chapel, and in the waggons and stepping into the boat when they go off on the honeymoon, with me waving my hat."

"And I might send up a few to the London papers," said the bald little chemist thoughtfully, considering the value of exclusive pictures of a unique ceremony.

Reuben went back to St. Issey delighted with himself. With his thumbs tucked into the armholes of his waistcoat, he strutted into the farm and explained about the photographs as if he had thought of it himself. "Our pictures will be all over the world," said he.

Nancy blushed; Mrs. Treworth's eyes brightened, for the first time she felt there might be something to be said for her husband's madness.

Twice a week the mail came to St. Issey bringing parcels of material to Nancy and long letters from her betrothed. Inside the rambling old farm all was confusion with clothes and chatter and the good-tempered teasing of experienced women towards a girl about to be initiated into the mystery of wifehood. The large parlour had been converted into a sewing-room; here several women came daily with their sewing machines; the place was strewn with lengths of



fabric, with dresses pinned, with dresses tacked, with dresses firmly stitched and finished dangling resplendent from coat hangers. Paper patterns littered every available resting-place; often Nancy went running breathless to telephone to have special coloured cottons sent by post. Sometimes two men rowed the farm boat across to St. Peter's Town to match a minute piece of silk or a fragment of lawn.

Outside the farmhouse preparations were being made just as urgently. A rough pole had been put up on the landing-stage to serve as a flagstaff, and five others reared at regular intervals on the way up to the farm. Reuben with a list in his hand swaggered about instructing every man in his special duties for the grand ceremony.

A few days before the wedding he insisted on a rehearsal. Flags were hoisted up to the heads of the flagstaffs. The six clumsy horses were harnessed into the shafts of the three gaudy, plank-laden waggons and led down to the chapel. Everything went smoothly except that a few of the roped-on planks were jolted off, but this, Reuben explained, was because no one was sitting on them.

That day the provisions for the feast came. The islanders gathered to watch the landing, nudging one another, marveling at the profusion. Unfortunately one of the boatmen slipped on the landing-place and a box fell into the water, an accident which caused Reuben to rub his hands delightedly. There had been no heavy sea for several weeks to scour off the shiny weed from the rocks, now the slight accident had forewarned him of the peril to the wedding party. He had the rocks scraped. He boasted that he was leaving nothing to chance.

"But something will go wrong—you'll see," said Nancy.

"Don't know what then," answered Reuben, scratching his head.

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"If you are going to have everything photoed," said Mrs. Treworth, "it's a pity about Mr. Timms, he's always so shabby."

"Well, we'll get over that," said Reuben, and away he went to telephone across to the chemist and have Mr. Timms brought to the telephone, an operation which took an hour. Tactfully he asked the minister to dress as well as he could for the wedding. Mr. Timms answered nervously that he would do his uttermost, but that generally in the winter months he wore his oldest clothes when journeying from island to island on his duty, because he was liable to be drenched by salt spray. As a matter of fact Mr. Timms was not a good sailor. Often he missed coming to St. Issey on his fortnightly visit even when there was a moderately bad sea, and frequently, when he did come, he conducted the service in a very absent manner, his face pale and sunken, his articulation inclined to fade right away.

Two days before the wedding the wireless weather forecast predicted low pressure, rising wind, cyclones. Nancy glared at her father. Reuben rubbed his hands and said: "They can't tell how it will be on islands. Look how clear and smooth the sea is now. In for a fortnight or more."

At dusk he watched the sky with some misgiving; the air was strangely disturbed by wayward puffs, the sea where it touched the island was gleaming whitely, like an animal beginning to show its teeth.

"What did I say?" demanded Nancy triumphantly of her father.

"A scat of wind maybe, and the sooner it comes the sooner over and done with," said Reuben, yawning with affected indifference.

In the morning it seemed that Reuben was justified. There was only some veering wind, the sun shone palely

through low-moving clouds, the sullen, lumpy crests of waves were caught by the light here and there to gleam like old silver.

"There you go—what did I say?" cried Reuben.

"Suppose it gets worse though?" insisted Nancy.

"I'd get your man over somehow. I feel as if nothing could beat me."

"If he says that, Father means it," said Mrs. Treworth, "though to my way of thinking it would be safest to send Harry a wire and tell him to come across at once now there's a chance and bring Mr. Timms with him. It wouldn't matter so much about the others."

But Reuben was scandalised at the suggestion. The bridegroom must not see the bride on the wedding day till they met at the altar. He became indignant and spoke as if the suggestion were an outrage to his personal honour and the honour of St. Issey, but the fact of the matter was he had now got the order of the wedding so firmly fixed in his mind that he was almost powerless to divert it.

Later in the day Nancy was fetched to the post office telephone and heard the voice of Henry Green. He said that he had arrived at St. Peter's, that the coastguard had advised him to come to St. Issey at once, they had prophesied that a gale would rise that night, and though it might fall calm by morning, yet there would be a huge sea. Nancy all in a flutter, hardly able to speak or think, bade him hold the line while she consulted her father.

"Never heard of such a thing; of course he can't, it would spoil everything," said Reuben.

Mrs. Treworth, noticing the distress on her daughter's face, tried persuasion. "You know, Reuben, it blew hard for weeks five years ago at about Christmas time and no post or anything got over."

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"I'll manage even if I've to hire the St. Peter's lifeboat to ferry him across," answered Reuben, king of the few arable and rocky acres of St. Issey and its sixty-seven infirm, able and cradled inhabitants. What next! He had it in his mind to be photographed on the landing-stage greeting the bridegroom, and the minister with the register under his arm, and the fiddler with the instrument under his chin, the smiling guests as a background. "I'd rather put it off altogether than have him come beforehand and spoil everything," said Reuben.

Nancy telephoned this decision to her disappointed betrothed, who then settled into an hotel from where he could see St. Issey rising like a blot out of the bleak greyness of the sea.

On the island the three old men turned their faces up to the sky and shook their heads, and soon after dark Reuben himself had doubts. The wicks of the farm lamps flared in the draught, doors banged, tissue-paper scampered along the floor of the sewing-room and escaped into the passage, soot was blown down the chimney to settle on the dresses and garments that were ready to be packed into the new boxes bearing Nancy's new initials. The wind moaned and fluted around the angles of the building like an orchestra tuning up, rain fell against the window in spurts. From these first comparatively gentle warnings the wind rose steadily, volleying in the chimneys, the flutings rising to a scream, the seas thudding against the island with a sound like the continuous beating of huge drums.

Mrs. Treworth and Nancy clung to one another, Reuben did his best to be jovial. Chimney-pots fell with a crash, the corrugated roof of the waggon shed was wrenched loose and clapped like an evil spirit applauding the success of the hurricane. A squat and ancient tree at the front of the



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farm was twisted and snapped and fell against the window of the sewing-room, breaking it in. Reuben, all valiant, struggled by the light of a storm lantern to close the drenching aperture with empty boxes and boards, while his wife and daughter, laughing and crying hysterically, gathered up the splendid frocks and ran with them to a back room. The massive walls of the old farmhouse rocked; to the three people sitting in the kitchen, drinking tea at frequent intervals, it seemed as if the island was being split in pieces and nothing of it would remain. Nobody thought of going to bed.

At four in the morning the tempest fell as suddenly as it had risen, with only the uproar of the wind-lashed sea as a reminder of its force. Mrs. Treworth dropped on her knees and babbled a prayer. Nancy lay across the table crying as if her heart would break. Reuben, ill at ease, said, "That's over, so now we'll get to our beds."

In the morning there was no wind and the sun shone out of clear sky. Reuben knew from the sound that there must be a heavy sea, but when he went outdoors, he gasped and stood very still. He had lived all his days on the island, but never before had he seen such mountainous waves, great smooth uncrested monsters rolling in to break on the rock-bound island and run seething up into fissures and low-lying ground like long, white, searching fingers. The sight made him feel dizzy.

"Sea is a bit lumpy, but when tide turns it will fall smooth as a pool," he told his family.

Mrs. Treworth went out to look at the sea and came back with pursed mouth and averted eyes. Nancy went out to look at the sea and came back pale-faced, just as if she were recovering from a serious illness.

The six poles which were to serve as flagstaffs had been

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blown down; the heavy rain had washed new ruts in the cart track; slates had been lifted from the chapel roof, the walls were sodden, pools stood on the floor. Reuben ran here and there directing and encouraging his men to repair these ravages.

The women began to arrive at the farm to prepare the feast. Dead leaves and straws blown in by the gale were energetically swept up, trestle tables were set out and burdened with an immense number of dishes made ready in the kitchen. All was clatter, clack, confusion, laughter and anticipation. The three old men, dressed in clothes of an ancient fashion, arrived slowly and ogled the food. Young men were grooming the six horses and strapping the planks more securely into the gaudy waggons. Preparations everywhere, while in the air, so still that a candle flame would not have flickered, rang the crashes of the surrounding sea to make the very foundations of the island quiver.

The old men looked at one another and shook their heads. "Not even Moses would get 'em across," said the atheist.

Reuben, seeing the malice on the old man's face, wished that he had thought of chartering an aeroplane. He set out with a dignified strut from the farm to telephone to St. Peter's Town, but when he was out of sight he broke into a nervous run.

He returned panting but jubilant, flicking the finger and thumb of each hand. "Now you Jeremiahs," he shouted, "it's all fixed up. Johnny Nixon is bringing the party over in his motor boat. He didn't make any bones about it either."

The atheist waved a stick erratically towards the sea and said shrilly: "That's all well enough, Johnny is a fine seaman, he'll get 'em here, but what about landing 'em?"

Reuben hadn't thought of that. There was a terrific

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run and pull of sea about the landing-stage; no boat could come in there. "They'll hop ashore round the other side on the sand," he said, trying to speak as if he had worked out the problem of the landing in his mind.

The atheist was hobbling away to the crest of the island from where he could see the reach of sand. Reuben stood still, fuming. He knew there was too much sea for any boat to make a landing on the sand or anywhere else on the island. It would be suicidal to make the attempt. He pushed the bowler hat he had bought in honour of the wedding far back on his head. The boat was probably even then churning her way across on those toppling seas. He thought wildly of dragging every one of its passengers through the broken water, and then he had his great inspiration.

The life-saving apparatus! He himself was in charge of that, and though there was never any occasion to use it, yet every quarter there was a practice when each man of the crew got ten shillings for his services. Good, there should be a practice that very morning.

He thrust the key of the rocket house into the hand of a man he trusted and told him to get the apparatus in position on a flat cliff fifty feet above the landing-place and muster the crew there. He leaped like an acrobat into the farmhouse and hugged his wife suffocatingly, so pleased was he with the solution of his greatest difficulty. "I told you I'd get him here," he said, explaining the plan.

Nancy, resplendent in her wedding dress, was half-heartedly arranging a huge bouquet of Madonna lilies: "What! just as if he was coming ashore from a wreck?"

"Aye, and it will be the talk of the world," shouted Reuben.

The old men heard the news with dissatisfaction, till the

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atheist reminded them that there was a chance of someone dropping out of the breeches buoy into the sea; then they brightened up and hobbled away to get good positions on the cliff.

Reuben took charge of the apparatus, his voice rang out magnificently. A fine salt drizzle and the noise from the breaking waves hindered the work, but except for a few of the usual difficulties, the rocket gun, and coils of rope of varying thickness were all in readiness and the breeches buoy tested and the crew in their correct positions when the boat from St. Peter's Town hove in sight.

She came slowly, rising high up on the top of a roller, then dropping invisible, then showing again, a black spot appearing and disappearing in the shining, unbroken hills of the sea. Nancy with a raincoat over her wedding dress watched the boat with dilated eyes, clasped her hands and bit her pale lips. All the islanders and many dogs were on the little grassy promontory, even an old blind, deaf and incapable woman and one baby sleeping placidly.

Reuben stood importantly on the extreme edge of the cliff with his bowler hat in one hand and a battered copper megaphone in the other, alternately bellowing and frantically gesticulating to the astonished owner of the motor boat, which was laden with passengers, some standing, some sitting, some lying. After a lengthy exchange of signals, shouts and gestures, Johnny Nixon at last grasped the idea; he raised his hand and proceeded to manœuvre his little craft, dropping two anchors seaward, then paying out the ropes till the craft was as near to the cliff as she could be with safety, the huge rollers passing under her in masses of clear unbroken water, swinging her up and down like a cork as they swept inshore to break against the rocks in a dazzling, yeasty ferment.

"Now!" thundered Reuben, and the first rocket hissed



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into the air, trailing a thin line in its curve, and fell far beyond the boat but many yards to the left.

"Again!" bellowed Reuben, and this time all was well, the rocket fell true, allowing the thin line to drop across the boat. From this first line others of increasing thickness were hauled out till the final stout cable on which the breeches buoy was to travel was made fast to the stern of the boat. Then Reuben, licking a pencil, scribbled a hasty note to Johnny Nixon and tied it to the breeches buoy, and down it jiggled at an angle of forty degrees over the seething water.

The first to come ashore was the bridegroom, waving his hat jauntily, his elegantly trousered legs swinging over the milky break of the waves. The islanders led by Reuben cheered him, not very heartily but still a cheer. The bridegroom shook hands with Reuben, kissed his fingers to Mrs. Treworth and folded Nancy in an embrace.

The photographer came next, the little, bald, hatless chemist. He looked ill, he complained in a whining voice that the flying spray would hinder his work. Then came the fiddler, with his instrument under his chin, fiddling away comically as he swung high in air. Then came various guests. Reuben frowned impatiently; he had instructed Johnny Nixon on the piece of paper in what order the people should land. The minister, Mr. Timms, should have come immediately after the bridegroom. A very heavy man, a butcher who was supposed to come last on account of the strain on the gear, disentangling himself from the breeches buoy and took Reuben ostentatiously aside: "Johnny told me to tell you," said he, "that Mr. Timms is no cop."

"What!" said the aghast Reuben.

"Mr. Timms been spueing his insides out and is most dead, and so are some of the others."

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"Never mind them," said Reuben grimly, "but Timms is paid to come, and come he shall."

"That's what Johnny told me to tell you," said the butcher with an air of finality.

Reuben stared round him. The bridal couple were in close communion; the islanders flaunting their best clothes ranged round expectantly; away on the sea was the motor boat with the captain plainly visible, shaking his head and indicating a small group of prostrate people laid out in the stern.

For a moment the blood rushed unpleasantly to Reuben's head and he felt beaten, but only for a moment. "I shall go off and bring Mr. Timms ashore in my arms," he said casually.

The going down to the swaying and tossing boat was not so comfortable as the journey up from her. Reuben had to shut his eyes. He did not feel at his best when he was hauled unceremoniously into the boat. There was a cold sweat on his brow and his eyes felt tight in his head.

Mr. Timms, hardly recognisable in his abject misery, murmured his regret. Reuben talked as loudly as he could and as cheerfully as he could of what he proposed doing. But there was no conviction in what he said, his voice dwindled. He knew that he was not equal to being hauled ashore in charge of a man who seemed on the verge of death. "Sooner I get the pastor back the better," said Nixon, "and all being well I'll bring him again to-morrow or when it's likely I can land him."

"Can't you give him a stiff dose of brandy?" said Reuben.

"I tried but he couldn't hold it."

Reuben shuddered. He felt that it was the rolling of the boat which deprived him of initiative. He glared at the

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prone minister, and the minister, doing his best, smiled wanly and rolled his eyes towards a neat leather case (in which were his books and the register), as if he wished his patron to know that he had come prepared to do his duty.

And then Reuben had still another idea. He put his face close to the stricken Mr. Timms and said slowly and very distinctly : " Suppose the couple kneel here could you carry on ? "

Mr. Timms licked his lips many times, closed his eyes, opened them, and said with a fluttering groan : " Yes, if they sign the register."

Then Reuben, fighting the increasing lethargy which threatened him, got again into the cradle, but this time insisted on being lashed in, and was hauled up to the firm cliff. " I've fixed it up," he said. " Nancy and Henry are to go aboard the boat and the reverend will marry them as tight as if it was done in chapel."

A few of the islanders cheered; Mrs. Treworth clutched at her breast, but Nancy threw her arms first about her mother and then about her father and boldly got into the breeches buoy. The bridegroom shook hands with everybody, made a shy speech and was ready directly his turn came.

So while the boat rocked and rolled and pulled on the two ropes which held her from destruction, the Rev. Timms whispered his few words and the two young single people wrote shakily the few words which legally made them one, and the witnesses testified that this had been properly done in their presence. The young husband raised his hat; the young wife raised her arm : Nancy's boxes were fetched and swung aboard. Johnny Nixon started up the engine, drew in the anchors, and his boat churned away over the sea.

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Then the fiddler, who was trying to win favour from the only unattached young woman on the island, was fetched and played a march to lead the party back to the farm for feasting and jollity. The old atheist shouted something mocking about rice and worn-out shoes. Reuben, who felt himself to be a king once more, seized his wife's arm and began to sing and laugh like a drunken man.



FRANK O'CONNOR

## *Repentance*

HE knew he should have been overjoyed, but he wasn't. Preparation for his first confession and first Holy Communion involved the importation into the school of a horrid old devil of a woman in a big black bonnet and black-beaded cloak who kept them in for an extra half-hour during the whole week. While she talked Micky's attention wandered from her beard, which was large, to her rings, which were many. She was supposed to be enormously rich, and somehow the story had gone the rounds that she would give them sweets. She gave them no sweets at all, and when on her first visit she opened her large handbag it was only to produce a candle and a box of matches. She staggered from her seat to the mantelpiece, wagging her big rheumatically buttocks, and lit the candle. Then with fat, yellow, half-dead fingers that shone with rings she opened her purse and took out a crown-piece. A thrill of expectation ran through the roomful of ragged little boys; Micky's heart leaped wildly, and in the silence that followed, the silly song of a blackbird rose and fell from the green boughs that tapped the high square school-window.

"I will give five shillings," she said in a solemn voice,

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“ five shillings in silver I will now give to any little boy who will hold one finger, only one finger, in that candle flame for five minutes.”

They looked from her to the crown-piece and from that to the candle, chagrin and disappointment seizing all their hearts.

“ One shilling for every minute,” she said, head lowered, bonnet wagging. “ Oh, my, isn’t that high wages ? What ? No little boy wants to earn five shillings ? ”

No one answered. Micky thought it was more than his mother earned for a week’s work.

“ For the last time,” she said, her tone growing more solemn.

Still no one replied.

“ And yet,” she went on, her voice rising shrilly, “ by offending against Almighty God you run the risk of burning, not your finger but your whole body and soul, not for five nor ten nor twenty minutes, but for all eternity, for ever and ever. For ever—do you understand the meaning of that ? ”

“ Yes, ma’am,” they chorused.

“ You don’t like school, do you ? ”

“ No, ma’am,” replied a few of the bolder spirits.

“ And you’re all wishing it was half-past three so that you could go home and have your dinners and play ? ”

“ Yes, ma’am,” they agreed with a little more unanimity; all but one sponger who chimed in with “ No, ma’am, we likes listening to you.”

“ Hell,” she intoned, “ is a school from which you will never get out. Never ! Three o’clock will come, half-past three, four, but no devil will ever say ‘ School is over.’ ” She chuckled grimly, and, leaning with one hand on the back of her chair, she poked her index finger at one after another of them. “ And it won’t be any use holding up your hands then and saying, ‘ Please may I go home now ? ’ ”

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In the gloomy silence that followed while she pulled up her skirts and resumed her seat, nodding her black bonnet menacingly, Micky, listening to the blackbird's silly piping, wished that the good God had permitted him to be born a blackbird, so that he could perch on a bough and look in the school window and whistle derisively at the poor dejected urchins within, trying to cope with the twin horrors of sums and hell.

As if that wasn't enough there was the sight of his grandmother to upset him when he came home to dinner. His grandmother, his father's mother, had come to live with them and he hated her. He hated her wrinkled face and untidy grey hair; he hated her snuff-taking and the bare dirty feet on which she plodded about the kitchen; he hated the great meal of potatoes she cooked for herself morning and evening, the way she spread a potful on the table, peeled them with her fingers, dipped them in a heap of salt and then ate them. He hated her blind fumbling for things, and the way she produced snuff-box and purse and even sweets from her bosom, unpinning her blouse and shivering. He hated her and everything about her, and was quite irreconcilable. Neither beatings from his father nor coaxings from his mother would induce him to tolerate the old woman. Nora, his elder sister, was on excellent terms with her, did messages for her and got pennies in reward, but even the pennies, even when Nora grigged him with them till she drove him into hysterics, even these did not induce him to speak nicely to his grandmother.

As ill-luck would have it his mother had got a week's work picking fruit in the nurseries, and to spite him, Nora refused to give him his dinner in the front room, as his mother did to take him from under the old woman's eyes.

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"I wants me dinner in the room," he said.

"Well, you won't get it," snapped Nora. "As if you hadn't us heart-scalded enough as it is! You'll take it in here or do without it."

"I wants it in the room," he repeated, and began to sob.

"Och, aye," said his grandmother sourly, drawing the old knitted shawl more tightly about her shoulders. "I suppose 'tis all my fault. Give it to him in the room, Nora girl. Give it to him in the room, and he can do without his pinny on Saturday."

"I wo' not," replied Nora. "The dirty spoiled suppurating little caffler! . . . Shut up now or I'll scratch your eyes out."

Micky wailed louder than before.

"'Tis all me ma's fault," continued his sister. "Giving him bad habits."

His grandmother took another pinch of snuff and smoothed down her dirty grey hair in the middle.

"I won't be a trouble to ye long," she declared, her voice trembling with self-pity. "I know I'm a bother to ye, but 'twill soon be over whin ye carry me to me long home. Soon enough, soon enough ye'll be rid of the poor ould woman. Up in Kilcronin 'tish't there they'll refuse me or be ashamed to sit with me."

"Eat your dinner, you plague!" shouted Nora, catching him a clout over the ear.

"I will not! I will not!" he screamed, and when she grabbed him he shouted and kicked and tore and bit.

There was a terrible scene that ended by his taking refuge beneath the table in the darkness, sobbing madly. He had a bread knife in one hand and a small heavy pot in the other with which he lashed out at Nora whenever she tried to crawl



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underneath to dislodge him. His grandmother and Nora knew there would be trouble if his mother came in and found him like that, so their approaches became more and more tender until at last they were offering him sweets and pennies to come out and eat his dinner in the room. But the softer they grew the more savage he became, and at last his mother did come in and find him. They caught it, and Micky was petted and fed back to sanity.

Then they had their innings. Nora, the little spy, told his father all about it; his father tried to beat him, his mother intervened, and there was another scene. It always worked out that way, that his father and Nora were on one side, his mother and he on the other, and between them the intruder, the big, dirty old peasant woman with her rosary beads twined about her wrist.

Next day the black-bonneted instructress was there again with her dolman and her rings. This time it was to tell them what a terrible crime it was to keep a secret from the priest. Oh, a terrible crime that was! No sin, however dreadful in itself, could be as bad as the sin of concealing it and making a bad confession. She had a long rigmarole of a story about a man who once did such a thing and, to all appearances, became very holy afterwards. All the people admired and respected him, and when he died, they were so certain that his soul had gone straight to heaven that they didn't even bother to pray for him. But some time later his ghost appeared and went about telling everyone his secret sin and how he had been damned because of it. And even while it was speaking his ghost had not ceased to burn and writhe, and after it had disappeared the room was full of the smell of roasted flesh. This story made a great impression on Micky and exasperated his already strained nerves.

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At home another scene. This time it was really his fault. Neither Nora nor his grandmother was speaking to him, and Micky sat in a corner reading his book, an adventure story full of pirates and desert islands. The old woman went to brew a cup of tea for herself, and when he heard her bare feet padding across the kitchen, in spite of himself he looked up, all his hatred concentrated on her in an instant. Then as she reached for the cup from the shelf something broke in him and he began to cry. She heard him and looked round and raised her dirty hand to heaven.

"Oh, the malice!" she said in a horrified tone. "The malice!"

And so a terrible week passed, and Saturday came, the day he was to make his first confession. Because of the distance he had to come he was allowed to make it by himself in the parish church. Nora brought him down by the hand, and all the way kept telling him what a doing-over the priest would give him. Outside the church he stuck his two feet in the pathway and refused to enter. She dragged him after her, only turning to address a whoop of glee or a fresh threat to him.

"Ah," she said, "I hope he'll give you the pinitintial psalms. That'll cure you, you caffler!"

"I don't want to go," whined Micky.

"You'll have to go, you'll have to go," she chanted triumphantly. "Or the parish priest will be up to the house with a stick looking for you."

The church was an old one with two iron gates and an old stone front. All about the yard were trees. There was no stained glass in it, and the white light was broken here and there by boughs that lifted themselves against the window-panes. Once within the door the fear of God came on Micky.

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He gave himself up for lost and allowed himself to be led noisily through the vaulted silence, the intense and magical silence that seemed to have frozen within the ancient walls, buttressing them and lifting upon its shoulders the high pointed wooden roof. In the street outside, yet seeming a million miles away, in another world, a ballad-singer was drawling a ballad Micky knew well, and over which he had often shed a patriotic tear.

Adieu, adieu to Dublin town, for I must now away,  
Likewise Cork city where I spent so many a happy day.  
When I am in Bermudas, the view I shall deplore,  
Farewell, farewell, my native land, I mean the shamrock shore.

Nora sat in front of him on the bench beside the confessional box. There were a few old women before her, and afterwards a thin, sad-looking man with long hair came and sat beside Micky. In the intense silence of the church that seemed to grow deeper from the plaintive moaning of the ballad-singer he could hear the buzz-buzz-buzz of a woman's voice in the box; buzz-buzz-buzz and then the ba-ba-ba of the priest's. And then the soft thud of something that signalled the end of the confession, and out came the woman, head lowered, hands joined, looking neither to right nor left and tiptoed up the altar to say her penance. And again the buzz-buzz, a rush of sibilants, and the stern deep note of the priest's voice.

It seemed only a matter of seconds before Nora rose, and with a whispered injunction disappeared from his sight. He was all alone. Alone, and next to be heard, and with the fear of damnation in his soul, knowing as he did that he was about to make a bad confession and that nothing could save him. He looked at the sad-faced man. He was gazing at the roof with hands joined in prayer. A woman in a red blouse and black shawl had taken her place below him. She put a pin

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in her teeth, fluffed her hair out roughly with her hand, brushed it sharply back, then, with bowed head, caught it in a knot and pinned it on her neck. Micky heard the slide go, and Nora emerged. He rose, and looked at her with a hatred that was quite inappropriate to the occasion and the place. Her hands were joined as far down as she could possibly hold them, her eyes were modestly lowered, and her face had an expression of the most rapt and tender recollection. With death in his heart Micky crept into the box and closed the door behind him.

He was in pitch-darkness. He could see no priest or anything else. And anything he had ever heard of confession simply rose in tumult in his mind. He knelt to the right-hand wall and said, "Bless me, father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession." Nothing happened. The wall made no reply. He repeated it, louder. Still it gave no answer. Then he turned to the opposite wall, genuflected first, then again went on his knees and repeated the charm. This time he was certain he would receive a reply, but none came. He repeated the process with the remaining wall, again without effect. He had the feeling of someone with an unfamiliar machine, of pressing buttons at random. And finally the thought struck him that God knew, God knew all about the bad confession he had intended to make, and had made him deaf and blind so that he could neither hear nor discern the priest.

Then, as his eyes grew accustomed to the blackness, he perceived something he had not noticed up to this; a sort of shelf at about the height of his head. The purpose of this eluded him for a moment but then he understood. It was for kneeling on.

He had always prided himself upon his powers of climbing, but this was a tougher proposition than a gas-lamp or a



telegraph pole, and there wasn't as much as a foothold to be discovered. He slipped twice before he even succeeded in getting his knee on it, and the strain of drawing the rest of himself up was almost more than he was capable of. However, he did at last get his two knees on it, there was just room for those, but his legs hung down uncomfortably and the edge of the shelf bruised his shin. He joined his hands and pressed the last remaining button. He uttered his "Open Sesame" to the corner.

At the same moment the slide was pushed back and a dim light streamed into the little box. There was an uncomfortable silence, and then an alarmed voice asked "Who's there? What's wrong?" Micky found it was extremely difficult to speak into the grille, which was on a level with his knees, but he got a firm grip of the moulding above it, bent his head sideways and up and found himself looking almost upside down through the grille. The priest also had his head cocked sideways and up, and Micky, whose knees were being tortured by this new position, felt it was a very queer way to hear confessions.

"'Tis me," he piped.

"What?" exclaimed a deep, frightened and angry voice, and the sombre figure at the other side of the grille stood bolt upright, disappearing almost entirely from Micky's view. "What's this? What are you doing there? What's the meaning of it, I say?"

And with the shock Micky felt his hands lose their grip and his legs their balance. He discovered himself tumbling into space, and tumbling he knocked his head against the door, the door shot open, and he fell clear into the centre of the aisle. The middle door opened and out came a small, dark-haired priest with the biretta forward on his head. At the same moment Nora came skeltering madly down the aisle.

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"Lord God!" she cried. "The sniffing little caffler. I knew he'd do it. I knew he'd disgrace me." He received a clout across the ear which suddenly reminded him that for some strange reason he hadn't yet begun to cry, and that people might possibly think he wasn't hurt at all. He did cry then, with a vengeance. Nora slapped him again.

"What's this? What's this?" cried the priest. "Don't attempt to beat the child, you little vixen!"

"I can't do me pinance with him," cried Nora shrilly, cocking a shocked eye up at the priest as though wondering how he dared to interfere on behalf of disorder. "He have me driven mad. Stop your crying, you ignorant scut! Crying in the chapel! Stop it now or I'll make you cry at the other side of your ugly face."

"Run away out of this and let the unfortunate child alone!" growled the priest. He suddenly began to laugh, took out his pocket-handkerchief and wiped Micky's face. "You're not hurt, sure you're not? What's your name?"

Through his sobs, Micky told him.

"Well, Micky, you're a grand young fellow, you are so! Never mind your old sister. . . . Show us your head. . . . Ah, 'tis only a tiny bump; 'twill be better before you're twice married. . . . So you're coming to confession?"

"I am, father," replied Micky, his tears dwindling to sobs.

"Is it your first?"

"'Tis, father."

"Well now, Micky, wait five minutes till I get rid of these two old ones, and we'll have a great old talk. Will you?"

"I will, father."

With a feeling of great importance that somehow glowed through his tears like a sunrift behind a shower, Micky took his seat opposite the confessional. Nora stuck out her tongue at him, but he did not even bother to reply. A great feeling

of relief was welling up within him. The sense of oppression that had been weighing him down for a week, the knowledge that he was about to make a bad confession, disappeared. It was all old women and girls and their talk. He would tell everything, everything, to this priest, and take whatever punishment was coming to him like a man. There was nothing to show he had been weeping but an occasional sniff.

This time the priest kept the slide open for him and showed him what to do and where to kneel. And then they had a great chat, all about where Micky went to school, and who was teaching him, and what his father's job was, and what he wanted to be when he grew up. And when the time came to tell his sins, Micky, not wishing to keep the priest in doubt a moment longer about the type of child he had to deal with, bowed his head, clenched his fists and replied :

"Father, I made it up to kill me grandmother."

"Oh," said the priest with polite interest. "Your grandmother."

So then Micky had to explain what sort of woman his grandmother was, that she drank porter, took snuff and went about the house in her bare feet. It was all made infinitely easier because the priest never once took his eyes off Micky's face, and at every few words interrupted with a sympathetic "Tut-tut!" or "Well! well!" As he seemed to be so interested and understanding, Micky thought he might as well tell him the whole thing; how he had planned to come behind her while she was eating a meal of potatoes and hit her over the head with a hatchet. They had a discussion about the hatchet. The priest thought a knife would have been better, as there would be a danger that the old woman would scream. Micky admitted that he hadn't thought of that, but this wasn't quite true, as he had thought of it vaguely, but had rejected it because he couldn't imagine himself

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running a knife into her. On the other hand, the priest considered his plan for disposing of the body most ingenious. He proposed to make a cart out of an orange box which he could get at the shop for threepence and take her out that way in pieces. The pieces he intended to bury in a deserted field a few hundred yards away from the house. He told how he had rehearsed the burial on two occasions after dark, stealing out with a cardboard box and a trowel, and burying it by starlight.

"Lord!" exclaimed the priest. "You must have been frightened."

"Ah, no, only a bit," said Micky.

"But wouldn't they see the blood on the car?"

"They would not. I'd wrap up the bits in paper."

"I suppose you could do that," admitted the priest.

"But all the same I don't know. I often thought of killing people myself, but I'm not like you. I'd never have the nerve. And hanging is an awful death."

"Is it?" asked Micky, responding to the brightness of a new theme.

"Oh, an awful blooming death!"

"Did you ever see a fellow hanged?"

"Me? Hundreds of them, and they all died roaring. No, Micky, I'm afraid I'd never be brave enough for it. And besides, what would your father do?"

"How, father?"

"Well, what would you do if someone went and bashed your mother's head in with a hatchet . . . and then cut her up in bits and took her away in a cart to bury her?"

"Lord, father," said Micky, catching his lip with horror, "I never thought of that."

"Well, there you are! No, Micky, before you do a thing like that you ought to consider the consequences. Think it



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over well, and come back and tell me. Only, mind, I'm not going to help you. . . . When I think of the fellows I saw being hanged . . .”

For three years Micky went to confession to him every Saturday. Then one day it all came back to him, he grew hot and cold by turns, and afterwards he went to that priest no more. When he saw him in the street he ran miles to avoid him. As he died some years later they never spoke again. But one night in a Paris hotel Micky remembered it all, and it was as if tears were falling within his mind, and then it seemed as though window or door were suddenly opened and magic caught him by the hair.

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## *Far Away: Not Long Ago*

IN 1934 we scoff at those photograph albums with which it was once a custom to entertain visitors. Yet I expect many of us cherish snapshots of ourselves as children; and that we take them out, in secret, to indulge the sentimentality our ancestors paraded. Most people lack courage to be publicly out of date. Few, whose memories are happy and absurd, enjoy any pleasure so much—provided they are unobserved.

There is a glossy photograph, spotted with damp, of which I am fond. It represents a family group, with guests and domestic animals, all—except the wriggling kitten—stiffly posed. Mother and the other ladies are seated upon chairs, with long skirts arranged to hide their feet. My father stands over them, trying to look the part of “head of the house,” ill suited to his incurably boyish face and the twinkle in his eye. He wears a straggling moustache and a Norfolk jacket like the famous one of Mr. Bernard Shaw. Beside him, Prince has been made to strike an attitude as though he were a pointer in a sporting print. We children sit on the ground. (Grown-ups did not “loll” in those days.) I, with long

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curls, am clasping my Aberdeen terrier. The school-boy in an Eton collar—he was killed a few years later in the war—is encouraging my sister's black pug, Clovis, to beg. Behind us is our home—not any house we rented, but the one in which we were born. Mother had come to it as a bride. She had put my grandmother's solid mahogany into the servants' bedrooms: my great-grandfather's farm-house oak into the kitchen; and had furnished the front rooms with spindle-legged rosewood suites, and "art" cretonnes of the 'nineties. I liked best the working parts of the house, shut off behind green-baize doors.

In the photograph can be seen the wall of the breakfast-parlour, built of local grey stone, and covered with espalier pear trees and Gloire de Dijon roses. Beyond it is a glimpse of our hay-fields sloping up towards gently enfolding hills. As I recall that green landscape, I marvel that it contained no arterial roads, gaudy with petrol pumps, no bungalows with pink asbestos lids: that never a motor-bus nor a char-a-banc thundered through its twisting lanes, nor an aeroplane hummed overhead. The people who lived in its solitary, white-washed farms and few gentlemen's mansions had never heard a loud-speaker. The girls of the district wore the rosy faces God had given them. They did not know what a film star was.

Our own house, but for the addition of Victorian bow windows, looked as it must have done in the eighteenth century. Our family unit, in my favourite photograph, allowing for a difference in dress, resembles the picture of Sir Thomas More surrounded by his issue and their pets.

"Far away and long ago," I say to myself as I study those composed gentlewomen with ornately dressed hair, one of whom holds a parasol to keep the sun from her complexion; those children who went to church every Sunday morning in

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“best clothes” with a washed sixpence; that little country house in which were twenty-two clocks that each kept a different time, and a barometer which always—but seldom with truth—foretold fine weather. Far away, certainly, my childhood in a remote part of Wales now seems. It is strange to reflect that such a life could still be lived, not very long ago.

When I was little and wore tartan frocks because my maternal grandfather had been a Campbell, King Edward led the mode for motor-cars and bridge. But we in Radnorshire, like the ladies of Cranford, prided ourselves upon our “elegant poverty.” We had always driven behind horses, and saw no reason for change. The wealthier gentry, who kept coachmen, would not have been permitted by those faithful, if sometimes drunken, tyrants to cease being “carriage folk.” As for my father, he was far too attached to Taffy, our Welsh cob, to dream of discarding a gallant friend for any mere machine. Besides, our roads were, as yet, untarred. When some odious stranger came honking through our quiet country in summer-time, his resented passage raised a cloud of dust, and we fled into the ditch, clutching our dogs.

Our own drives were taken in the dog-cart. The groom-gardener brought it round to the front door, and stood, holding Taffy, while he champed at his bit and spattered up the gravel, and was sworn at. After long waiting, occasioned by the loss of our gloves and hair-ribbons, Mother gathered up her dress and stiff silk petticoat, and climbed in, calling indignantly: “Children! *Will* you hurry!” At last we followed her and clambered on to the hard back seat. Finally, my father came down the steps, jauntily trailing a mackintosh behind him. It was a matter of pride with us not to hold on when he took the reins and flicked the whip. Then the groom-gardener leapt aside, and Taffy reared, and Mother screamed, and the trap plunged down our perilously steep



drive in a series of bounds. We dug our feet against the splash-board, and were terrified and delighted. Some good neighbour in the little market town close by had seen our headlong descent, and ran to open the gates. We executed a right-angle turn on one wheel into the main street, just missing the butcher's dogs and preceded by our own, who tore ahead of us, frantically barking. Everyone in the place stood conversing in the middle of the roadway. They sprang on to the pavement only when Taffy's foam-splashed blinkers were close upon them. Grinning, they touched their hats to my father, who turned round to wave friendly salutations. Every time he did this, Taffy shied from gutter to gutter, and we were nearly flung off our narrow perch. On market days the street was full of cattle. It had not been thought necessary to build a smith-field, since folk were in no hurry to pass through the town. Cows, guarding their calves, rushed with horns lowered at our dogs. Flocks of sheep brought us to a series of abrupt halts, while Taffy danced with impatience. We were hurled about, and exceedingly uncomfortable, exposed to every storm of wind and rain. Yet how we loved the adventure of those drives! We leapt down at each hill to run ahead gathering wild-flowers in the hedgerows. We gave breathless chase when my father passed us and pretended to drive away before we could once more hoist ourselves into the trap. He never waited for us to be seated: and Mother always cried, "*Oh, do be careful!*"

Roads were full of exciting surprises then. Every bend was sharp; what lay beyond was hidden by overhanging trees and unpruned hedges that in summer were a flowering jungle of dog-roses and honeysuckle. Sometimes we met a steam roller, and Taffy tried to capsize us into a ditch. A man with a red flag ran to his head. We saw a stream flash close below

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the poised wheel. Water-avens and meadowsweets, growing in the high bank against which we lurched, swished, wet and fragrant, into our faces. My father gave Taffy a cut across the withers. He kicked and bounded forward. The roadman let go his hold. We saw him stagger and almost fall as we were whirled away at a canter. Yet those who have never driven in anything better than a motor-car declare that driving behind a horse must have been dull and slow !

Occasionally we went for a longer expedition in a wagonette. The one we hired in our home town, which ignorant visitors called a village, was drawn by two gaunt steeds known to us as " the 'bus horse " and " the horse mare." More often than not on these festive days we held up a double row of umbrellas, between which the rain pattered on to the tarpaulin rug across the company's congested knees. I do not think our English guests enjoyed these outings, proudly planned to show them the beauty of Welsh scenery. We kept saying " Look ! " Every time we did so they had to twist themselves round to face outwards, while the wet trickled inside the upturned collars of their mackintoshes. They politely murmured " Very picturesque,"—but they shivered. Since we enjoyed eating hard-boiled eggs and sodden sandwiches in dripping ferny glens beside waterfalls, we felt no pity for these Saxons' sufferings.

I remember one outing which began at a very early hour upon a morning of persistent drizzle. We made a slow journey in an unwarmed railway train. At a tiny halt, high among bleak mountains, an open carriage awaited us. To it were harnessed a hairy fetlocked cob, related to a carthorse, and a hill pony with a wild mane and a tail that almost touched the ground. At sight of the train, this ill-matched pair bolted, and dashed round a bend in the stony lane. We children thought this a splendid joke ; but our elders, their

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arms full of field-glasses, rugs, fishing-rods and luncheon hampers, were growing anxious by the time we overtook the sweating runaways—a mile from our trysting-place. Part of the harness had broken, and our driver was repairing the headstalls with inadequate lengths of string. He told us that he “had only been catchin’ the small little pony off the old boy last week!” She had been shod for the first time yesterday, and “wasn’t fancying her new shoes; afraid o’ them in her heart she did seem to be.”

With a thrill of misgiving we hove ourselves on to the wet seats stuffed with straw. They emitted a dank odour. There was no time to sit down before the wagonette rushed forward, its iron-bound wheels raising the clatter of artillery. We were precipitated into one another’s laps. There were cries of “Mind the veal and ham pie,” and, “Oh, my poor hat!” and, “I beg your pardon!”—as we dashed along a narrow track. On one side of it towered desolate hills, with mist veiling their summits; on the other, slippery rocks fell away to the bottom of a ravine, where raged a peat-tinged torrent. Above the noise of our galloping progress could be heard the rushing of waters and the mewing of buzzards that circled overhead. At length the roads descended at a ski-run gradient to plunge into a ford. The horses jibbed and tried to lie down, while the driver urged them on with blows and blasphemy yelled in the Welsh tongue. Further on we reached a pass where the river foamed, deep and narrow, between huge boulders. On the far side was a wind-bent tree with a crow’s nest in its branches. Two of our party were urged to leap across from rock to rock and take the eggs, for the carrion crow is the enemy of sportsmen; and we were brave Nimrods, by proxy. Over they went—and into the water up to their waists they fell—while we shook with mirth. Uncle Frank was the first to make shore. His face,

the shape and colour of a harvest moon, wore its habitual bland smile. The bulky tweeds in which he was clad shed a wide circle of water around his stout person. After him struggled ashore our military guest, who was exceedingly tall and thin and very precise in his apparel. He pretended to enjoy the joke as much as we did, but he ceased even to pretend when we reached a neighbouring inn, and Mother insisted that he, as well as meek Uncle Frank, should change into borrowed clothes. A very small curate happened to be staying there for the fishing. This true Welshman was both hospitable and humorous, and conducted our dripping victims, *splish-splash*, up to his bedroom. When they came down to drink tea, well brewed upon the hob, they were both clothed in priestly black and were half throttled in the "dog collars" of the chuckling cleric's sacred calling. Uncle Frank's minute borrowed waistcoat would not meet where decency most required. The elegant English soldier had been forced into a coat, the sleeves of which ended just below his elbows, and trousers that left off half-way down his shins. Neither he nor Uncle Frank dared sit down. Our picnic luncheon was a hilarious success—so *we* considered.

Paying visits was not always such fun as entertaining guests. I remember a house in Pembrokeshire where my sister and I went to stay, accompanied by Mother and the frigid Miss Chalk, our all-too-English governess. We were met at the station late one dank afternoon in autumn by a venerable coachman, who resembled one of Anthony Trollope's divines, and two exceedingly fat horses. They conducted us at a stately jog-trot through deserted lanes that wound interminably between imprisoning banks. A white sea fog was stealing inland, tanged with salt and peat smoke, when we passed a tiny cottage with thatched roof on which grass sprouted. The wheels of the carriage, sunk in deep mud,



made never a sound but a muffled squelching. When we came at last to a long avenue, darkened by ancient beech trees whose leaves fell in a silent rain of russet, our voices sank to a whisper. We passed a little lake, still and sombre as a mirror at twilight. A solitary swan floated, ghostly, upon its glassy surface. I was telling myself the sad tale of a love-lorn maiden turned into a snow-white bird, when we drew up before the house. It was wan in the dusk, a melancholy mansion, whose plastered façade and classical pillared portico, in the Regency style, were stained with greenish tree droppings. At the front door our spinster hostess stood to welcome us. Her voice was deep and solemn. She was tall, very stout, and moved as slowly as she spoke. Behind her twittered a bevy of infantile servant-girls. I remember their flushed cheeks and dark eyes, startled as those of hares. They must have been the daughters of one father, I decided, though scarcely by the same mother; for they one and all looked to be sixteen years of age. They were as alike as the hundred princesses in the fairy tale, among whom the bewildered prince was able to discover his bride only by the aid of the friendly bee. Seizing our luggage, they rushed it upstairs with much nudging and timid commotion, while we were led by the ponderous Miss B. into her large dim drawing-room. It smelled of dry-rot, camphor and ill-trimmed lamps. An insufficient fire burned in a vast grate with a polished steel fender. There were chairs upholstered in plush and in cross-stitch, beaded footstools, little brackets with fringes hanging from them, and corner cupboards containing a vast deal of china. After a long wait, punctuated by conversation about dead relatives, I was relieved when in staggered one of the little maids, bearing an enormous silver tea-tray. But we were made to eat red-currant jam, full of seeds, and so sour that I could not refrain from grimacing, and was accordingly reprimanded.

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Meals in that house, whose musty odour I never shall forget, were a lengthy and grave business. Luncheon was intentionally cold, consisting always of a vast joint left over from dinner the night before; of apple tart, flavoured with quince, and cream in a jug large as an ewer. Breakfast and dinner reached the dining-room tepid after their long journey through stone-flagged passages from the distant kitchen. The big boiled turbots, the roast sirloins of beef and saddles of mutton came to table under pewter covers that might have served a warrior for shield. Our hostess said grace, and stood up majestically to carve. The portions she gave us were liberal. The meat was invariably raw. A table-spoonful of blood flowed round our plates. They were of fine old Swansea ware, much chipped. "My grandfather's service," we were told. Everything in the place was a relic of the past, the lady of the house herself the sole survivor of a once numerous clan.

On the night of our arrival, candle in hand, she led us up the wide shallow stairs that creaked dolefully beneath her gouty tread. Opening the door of a bedroom, whose walls were darkened by a crimson paper, she bade us look.

"There," she said, pointing in tragedy-queen style to a bed of darkest mahogany, "poor Adelaide breathed her last."

We gazed awe-struck, and she added, addressing Mother: "This, my dear, will be your room."

The fire of damp wood was smoking. On the funereal white marble washstand, cold as a gravestone, stood a brass can full of lukewarm water. I touched it with my trembling finger-tips, and hurried after the others along a shadowy corridor to the next room.

"In this bed," declared our hostess in sepulchral tones, "my beloved brother Alfred passed away." She drew aside

hangings of mourning purple, and indicated the pillow on which my sixteen-year-old sister must lay her long tresses of red-gold.

We exchanged a terrified glance; but none of us dared protest. So the procession proceeded, past cracked and tarnished mirrors that gave back our blanched faces, to yet another death chamber.

Above a brass bedstead, intended for a Victorian married couple, our hostess paused once more, and sighed.

"Georgina expired here," she told us, and turning her large face, flabby and parchment-coloured, and her gloomy gaze upon my small shrinking person, she added with a touch of grim irony: "You will have room and to spare in this bed!"

The last room that we entered, huddling together like frightened sheep, contained a four-poster with drapery of blue as inky as a midnight sky.

"My poor lamented Victoria——" she was beginning to say. But our Miss Chalk interrupted her with clipped decision.

"Am I expected to sleep here—*alone*?"

"Yes. This room is intended for you. Upon that bed——"

"I couldn't dream of letting my little charge sleep by herself," announced Miss Chalk; "the child is *so* highly strung."

I was ten years of age, and had enjoyed my own little white room with the Sistine Madonna over my bed for the last three years. But I did not contradict.

Without listening to protests, Miss Chalk (who came from Clapham and disapproved of Wales) flung wide the doors of dark cupboards, and pulled open the drawers of creaking tallboys; gathered together her possessions, which the tribe

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of little housemaids had hidden about the vast room as though they had been playing hunt-the-thimble with corsets and the like, and marched back into the scene of death allotted to myself. I never liked Miss Chalk's company so well.

On the following morning, after enduring half-cold bacon and family prayers, we were taken over the house. It was less terrifying by daylight, but even more depressing. Its lumber-rooms were full of rotting curtains, threadbare carpets and moth-eaten furs—for Miss B. never parted with anything. There was a "den" in which were ranged rusty guns used by male relations long since dead. The pipes they had smoked hung in a pathetic row. I was put in mind of another Welsh family of our acquaintance, whose elderly sons were not permitted by their octogenarian mother to smoke within doors. They had an ancestral vault in the neighbouring churchyard. On wet afternoons they adjourned there to enjoy a quiet smoke, surrounded by the leaden coffins of the deceased.

Our hostess, though so pious a conservative, had made one startling innovation—she had built a huge gaunt billiard-room of red brick.

"Not," as she admitted, "that I ever have gentlemen to stay . . . but still, one never knows!"

After it was finished by the local mason under her strict directions, she discovered the omission of windows. None could be added on account of the adjoining stable walls.

"But that does not signify," she told us, when, lamp in hand at noon, she proudly showed us this dungeon. "If any billiard-playing gentlemen *should* visit me, of course they will only wish to play after dark."

Sunday, in her household, was less dismal than the other days of the week, since it necessitated a bustle of preparations for church-going. Dining-room prayers were forgone. We rose from the breakfast-table at half-past nine, hastily, as



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people who have much to do, and were shooed up to our bedrooms.

"The carriage will be round at ten o'clock *punctually*," we were informed. "Divine Service is at eleven o'clock. We have five miles to drive, and nothing is in such deplorable taste as a late appearance at church."

But at half-past ten Miss B. was still in her room, attended by no less than four of her little maids. Her sonorous contralto commands and their piping flurried responses could be heard from overhead as we assembled in the hall. The head parlour-maid, who may have been just seventeen, was waiting in agitation with a vast silver salver. She handed us each a prayer-book and a hymn-book with a gilded coat-of-arms upon its red morocco cover. The fat horses dozed at the door; but the coachman, who, alone of the staff, did not fear his mistress, was growing impatient. His face became less ecclesiastically Trollopean, reverting to a stubborn peasant type.

"Please to step up, Miss," he commanded, fixing me with a severe eye, "and tell her as she'll be late *again* if she don't look sharp."

I fled upstairs and knocked at her door.

"Come in," she boomed; and I found her seated, trying on a purple velvet toque. A heap of other hats and bonnets of various periods, and most curiously decorated, covered her muslin-draped dressing-table. "This one," she announced solemnly, "I consider will best suit the present occasion. . . . Now my gloves, Megan. . . . No, not the lavender kid—the best white. . . . Annie, where is the sprig of *Old Man* fresh from the garden?"

It was offered her, but, after prolonged debate, she decided to carry a bunch of dried lavender. Mary Ellen then gave her a lace-edged handkerchief. Gladys had not rolled up the

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silk umbrella to her liking; it had to be refurled. At that stage of the proceedings my sister appeared, blushing, with a yet more urgent summons from the coachman; and, after some trouble with a veil, we formed a procession and descended to the hall. There it was discovered that Miss B.'s half-crown—the one set aside, bright from the mint—had been left upstairs. One of the little maids flew, palpitating, to fetch it. At last we hoisted our hostess into the carriage, while she protested that someone had taken her “poor dear Mamma's book of Common Prayer”—and the coachman muttered something in Welsh, which we were providentially not able to understand.

Miss B.'s spaniel accompanied her to church. Nor was she the only lady in Wales, when I was a child, to keep up the humane custom of grandly leading a dog up the aisle into the family pew.

Dear country of survivals! It is still green and glistening with moisture. Its inhabitants—thank God!—are even to-day more loquacious than punctual. In spite of the B.B.C., they have kept their engaging sing-song. Uniform education and easy communications have not—as yet—robbed them all of their rustic individuality. Yet when I look through my album of faded photographs I am sorry for my children. Wales they also may know and love. But they never knew God-father Fred, the last gentleman in our little town to wear side-whiskers, and to appear in church with a top-hat on which we longed to sit; nor his two spaniels, Dash and Pickles. No dogs of to-day are so sagacious; for they understood their master perfectly, whether he swore at them in English or in Welsh. And they disobeyed him equally in either language.

Nor has this generation been privileged to walk in her garden—full of gay old-world flowers—with Miss W., who gave me a seed-pearl brooch containing her parents' hair, cut,

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she assured me, from the heads of their corpses. She was very kind to me, but she upheld slavery as "a very proper institution for coloured people." Change was as abhorrent to her as were mice and men. She wore a crinoline and a tiny round bonnet until she died at the age of ninety, because it was in that garb she was jilted by her false love on her eighteenth birthday. Neither have the children of to-day known my old parson friend who yearly went to fetch his sisters from the adjoining county, explaining that he could not allow "the girls" to travel unaccompanied. Their names were Miss Jane and Miss Anne. One of them wore her white hair in three coy little ringlets on either side of her pretty wrinkled face; the other had hers in a chenille net. Both of them stuffed me with sugar-plums of their own preserving, and declared themselves "highly *obleege*d to you, dear child," whenever I went to visit them.

How these memories conjure up the peace of walled gardens, sweet with herbs and cabbage roses, no longer to be seen : the stuffy quiet of houses whose windows were seldom opened, and to be entertained in which was an awesome, yet comic, adventure !

It is with a sigh that I put away my album and turn on the electric light.

JULES ROMAINS

## *The Tan Boots*

WHEN they reached the corner of the rue de la Chapelle, Louis Bastide and his mother, who had walked thus far with the air of people who knew just where they were going, came to a stop. They looked right and left.

"Papa," said Mme. Bastide, "told us that we couldn't possibly make any mistake. I think it must be opposite."

"Would you like me to go and see?"

"Certainly not. We'd much better cross together. The rue de la Chapelle is one of the worst streets there is, with all these heavy teams of horses. Their shoes slip. The driver may tug his hardest; but you know what it is to hold in three or four horses as big as that."

"Or even six. . . . I've seen drays with six. I have, really, Mamma. Three abreast."

"Five, perhaps, but not six. You never see three leaders abreast in a team."

Louis flushed with annoyance; but he forbore to reply, for he felt that argument about it would be endless. His mother was authoritative and obstinate. Fond of him though she was, she loved contradicting and having the last word. He mustn't spoil a fine day, just for the fun of



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standing up to her. But still, nothing hurts so much as keeping your mouth shut when you know you are in the right.

It was, indeed, the rue Riquet that ran on the opposite side of the street.

"We should be able to find the shop easily enough. That lady told me she couldn't remember the number, but that it was just before the bridge over the railway, to the right—a brown shop."

A few days earlier, after awarding marks for an essay, M. Clanricard had called Louis Bastide at the end of class, and said to him :

"You've been top of the class twice in succession. I've looked at your reports for the rest of the year. If you don't play the fool too much in the course of the next month, I really think I shall give you the prize for excellence."

Louis had repeated this to his mother, except for the qualification : "If you don't play the fool too much in the course of the next month." He had suppressed it lest he should spoil the intoxication he felt when he saw how delighted his mother was at his news. Besides, his mother had a worrying kind of mind. She would have fastened on that bit of phrase and missed the rest of the sentence. "Now don't you forget that ! If you don't play the fool too much—he's giving you fair warning. It would be such a pity if you went and lost your prize for some prank or other at the last moment."

Now Louis reproached himself with that deliberate omission of his. He reproached himself the more because, on the next day but one after his news, his mother had suddenly said :

"We'll go and buy a pair of tan boots for you on Thursday. Then you can wear them at the prize-giving, and you'll have time to break them in meanwhile by putting

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them on two or three times, on Sundays. Besides, like this you can have the fun of them at once. It's because you have worked so well at school."

Mme. Bastide had often heard, from ladies whom she met marketing in the boulevard Ornano, about a bootshop in the rue Riquet. Quite a small shop, but it sold "at whole-sale prices." It was well worth while, in view of the quality, especially for children's foot-wear, or small sizes, or out-sizes. "He gets them straight from the factory." The ladies called this shopkeeper: "The Jew in the rue Riquet." They were not, perhaps, altogether sure that he was a Jew; and if he were, they would have been hard put to it to explain how this Jewish small shopkeeper managed to get his wares more "straight" than anybody else.

But, to help resign himself—and still more herself—to his or her fate as a purchaser, a buyer needs to imagine, behind only too obvious a business reality, some legend of business, in which there is room for strange chances, for the miraculous, for various mysterious consolations. The Jew naturally finds his place in this mythology. Sometimes, on account of his wide and deep machinations, he is identified with Satan himself. But he may also figure as a good little devil, a helpful démon. Repellent ugliness, a hooked nose, and a greasy jacket fit him all the better for his occult rôle.

Mme. Bastide was very responsive to this legend of business. A good part of her mental activity was devoted to looking for bargains. She picked up all the gossip she could about them. Even when it struck her as doubtful and she did not follow it up, the voice of conscience nagged at her for being lazy. She would go right across Paris, from the rue Duhesme to the boulevard Sébastopol, there and back, if she heard that Potin's was selling sugar or butter-beans a sou cheaper than anybody else.

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It is easy to smile and talk about short-sighted meanness. M. Bastide earned two hundred and ten francs a month, and people said of him that he had a "good job"—the kind of job a family man trembles at the thought of losing. Two hundred and ten francs a month make seven francs a day. Seven francs do not amount to any very large heap of sous. In that heap you can see every sou. Not one of them can take itself off, or even look like taking itself off, without your missing it.

It is natural that concern, when it is forced to be so constant, should become a bit morbid and tend to lose sight of its own object. Leave yourself to chance, as some people do, let yourself drift, with closed eyes, towards debt, poverty, and the poorhouse; or else get into a state of extreme nervous susceptibility over every sou that asks to be spent, and do more than it is worth to keep it—there is scarcely any other choice when your husband earns two hundred and ten francs a month.

Louis was thinking about his tan boots. But he was not keen about them yet, because he had not yet got them. He had not even seen them. So his desire for them remained rather vague. He preferred to think about the "Jew's shop." He imagined it with a narrow front, but running far back, with any number of customers come from every corner of Paris, sitting down with their unshod feet stuck out.

Besides, this walk in itself intrigued him to the point of making his heart beat faster. They had followed the rue Ordener, which he knew well as far as the bridge which crosses the Nord line. He had a deep affection for the glass kiosk that stood in the middle of the bridge and served as a shelter for passengers at the Pont-Marcadet halt. You were quite at liberty to go into this kiosk, stand there, and look

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at the railway tracks through the glass. You never had to wait more than a few minutes before you saw a train pass.

Louis had often heard it said, by his father and friends of his father's, that the trains on the Nord line were the fastest. He held them in particular esteem. When an express engine came out from under the bridge, Louis strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of it through the smoke with which it sprayed the kiosk. He looked for signs of speed and power in its lines and in the shape of its smoke-stack.

But, once he crossed the rue de la Chapelle, he got beyond the limits of his most adventurous runs with his hoop. What lay beyond was new to him. Or, at least, all this wide region was one which he had, indeed, skirted in some of his earlier Sunday walks with his parents; but into which he had never penetrated.

To the left, he remembered, were the fortifications and the outer boulevard, along which they had taken him one day as far as the porte de Flandre. To the right was a broad highway, familiar and easy to follow, the boulevard de la Chapelle, which was continued by the rue Secrétan.

It was that way they had taken him many a time to the Buttes-Chaumont. The Buttes-Chaumont must be somewhere in front of him, a long way off. Pretty high up in the sky. Perhaps you would get there if you walked for a long time straight in front of you. But it wasn't always easy to walk straight in front of you. You came upon walls; or the street turned and divided. If there were a gap wide enough between the blocks of houses, you might catch a glimpse of the Buttes-Chaumont in the distance. You might see them, hung up in the sky a bit, beneath a cap of black clouds: the Buttes-Chaumont, that astonishing part where you found mountain slopes, real ravines, caves, lakes, merry-go-rounds of wooden horses, a crowd so dense that it could



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hardly move; where the sun and Sunday made you very tired; and where there were flaky cakes which you ate greedily, but digested with difficulty.

But here, right opposite, where the rue Riquet went in, and in all these other streets of whose ends you caught a glimpse, and away over there towards those chimneys—here everything remained to be discovered.

Louis was in no hurry to throw himself into all this. He preferred to take his time. He had a presentiment already that the world which is given to us is not infinite, and that, if you do not approach it with certain precautions, you run the risk of exhausting it sooner than you should.

He was glad not to be going farther than this shop to begin with. Just a little bit of real advance into strange country was enough in itself to change the starting-point of your dreams. Then your dreams could go ahead. They could plunge into phantoms of districts, vague and fluid. They could prowl about them. It might be months before you really went there yourself. Meanwhile your dreams worked, bit by bit, upon these unknown regions, made them ready and marshalled them against the day when you entered them in person and saw them with your own eyes.

The only thing was that you ran some risk of being disappointed when that happened, didn't you? Perhaps; but Louis Bastide could not remember ever having been disappointed. To be sure, things were almost always different from what you had seen in your dreams. But the point was that they were "different." You could be quite content with these different things, which happened to be what really existed, coming along to take the place of dreams which you were beginning to know only too well.

This district was queer. The rue Riquet resembled no other along which Louis had ever gone anywhere else. He

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had forgotten by now what he had imagined it was like, when he knew it only by name. The shops were shabbier than in Montmartre. The people were not so well dressed. They had a hard, discontented look about them. The house-fronts were flat, blackish, unrelieved. Most of them were only three or four floors high, and their windows were small. But there was an astonishing number of heavy vehicles, of lorries passing along it.

Louis felt as though he were in another city. Beyond what he could see, beyond these people with their hard faces and these little blackish house-fronts, must stretch regions busier, noisier, more difficult to find your way about than anything he knew: marvellous rows of factory chimneys; walls still more interminable than those along which he had run panting behind his hoop; great enclosed spaces into which you could not look, from which came nothing but a noise, a whistling, a great metallic din. There must be workshops as far as you could see, and bridges over which lorries rumbled, and, all at once, little streets in which you were all alone.

You could wander about there for a long time, without ever feeling that you had got any farther, and yet without ever coming back twice to the same place. There would still be those people with their hard, morose faces. Nowhere would you shudder so continually at the idea of getting lost.

Before you really adventured into regions like these, you ought to dream about them a lot; give yourself time to try out gradually, in your head, all kinds of ways of going straight and going round, of losing yourself and finding your bearings again; accustom yourself to recognising no landmarks, but still not asking anybody the way.

Mme. Bastide was looking at the shops, one after another.

"Here we are. I think this must be it."

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Louis was scarcely thinking about his tan boots any longer. He had no desire to pay attention to the Jew, or answer his questions, or give his own opinion. His ideas had set off in a different direction. They were going along unknown streets, coming upon cross-roads and passers-by whose faces upset him.

Mme. Bastide was saying :

“How do you like these? They don’t hurt your feet, do they? Can’t you listen to me when I’m talking to you?”

All Louis could do was to let things take their course. He knew beforehand that they would buy boots rather too tight for him. His mother had an idea that boots which fitted easily made the feet spread, and she wanted him to have slender feet. Louis admitted that, in principle, she was right. Personally he would rather have run the risk of his feet spreading than endure a form of torture which was peculiarly painful to him. But he had no need by now to be told that the most praiseworthy things to do are those against which your nature revolts.

Otherwise, once he was shod, he had to confess that the chosen pair suited him very well. His satisfaction showed itself in his eyes. He cast an astonished glance at his old boots. He would never have believed they were so ugly.

His mother said to him :

“Would you like to keep them on and go home in them?”

She had hesitated about offering to let him do this before. Would it not expose the soles and heels to very premature wear, which was scarcely justified on a week-day? But, since the boy seemed so proud of his new boots, and since she had bought them by way of a reward for him, better let him have his pleasure while he was sure about it. A thing which strikes us as fine to-day will be no less fine three days

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hence. But shall we look at it with the same eyes? Enjoyment is capricious.

So Louis came out of the Jew's shop with his new boots on. He was proud of them, and they hurt his feet. By now he was thinking about them a lot. The little physical pain which they gave him was not disagreeable to him. It helped him not to lose sight for a moment of the fact that he owned a new piece of property, and that one part, at least, of his person was resplendently fashionable.

(It is an impression which wears off so soon. When you sport a new suit of clothes, it is really only on the first day that you feel that everybody is looking at you, and that you feel, yourself, the increase of power and prestige with which you are invested. So, if you do not taste this first day's pleasure to the full, you are wasting something you can never get back.)

Louis had a soul prone to emotion and easily satisfied; and he found himself rewarded far beyond his merits. To tell the truth, he was not thinking about his sin of deliberate omission any more. It was in quite a different direction that he felt his conscience pricking him.

Was he not letting himself be treated too much as a spoilt child, for whom his parents sacrificed themselves? Besides, more generally speaking, it disturbed him that things should be going so well for him, and around him. Only happiness deriving from his own dreams, or from his own play, which drew its substance from himself alone, left him undisturbed, however complete, however intoxicating, that happiness might be. But the fact that outside things should go too well made him anxious.

He had taken his mother's hand affectionately, just as he used to do when he was quite a small boy. From time to time she looked at him out of the corner of her eye, so that



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she could get something herself out of her son's pleasure. She looked at his boots, too. She noted with satisfaction that Louis was doing his best to walk without turning his feet in or rubbing his ankles together; that, in short, he was really doing all he could to treat this rather irregular present of new boots in a way that would leave little or no mark on them.

But while they were making their way along the rue Ordener, she noticed that the boy was looking thoughtful. He was staring very straight in front of him. He looked as though he were following up a train of thought which was a bit difficult for him, a bit out of his depth.

"What are you thinking about, my boy?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Aren't you feeling pleased with yourself any more?"

"Oh, yes, I am!"

"Well, then?"

"How much did these boots of mine cost?"

"Nine francs fifty. Didn't you hear me bargaining about them?" (Louis had; but he was afraid he had heard wrong.) "He wouldn't take off more than eight sous. Oh, they're dear enough! But they're really high-class stuff. It's very fine leather. And, in spite of the pointed toes, I'm sure they don't squeeze you much."

"Tell me, Mamma . . ."

"What?"

"How much does Papa earn a day?"

"But what do you want to know that for? What's it got to do with you?"

Mme. Bastide was not far short of blushing. All kinds of inhibitions invaded her, in the presence of this son of hers. She found his question ill-timed. She would have answered it even more sharply; but in his eyes, still looking

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straight in front of him, shone a serious light. She could not even pluck up the courage to tell him lies.

"How much does Papa earn? . . . Well, what he earns isn't too bad at all. To begin with, he's paid by the month. Sundays and holidays, too. Whether he's working or whether he isn't . . . and that isn't so with everybody. . . . That's where he's much better off than a labourer."

"Yes. But what does he earn a day?"

"You mean days when he's actually working?"

"I don't think so . . . no, that's not what I mean. . . . A day, I mean; how much a day to live on?"

Mme. Bastide almost blushed again.

"I haven't worked it out. . . . Not so much as ten francs, of course. It's only the very highest-paid workers who earn as much as ten francs."

"Oh! . . . and not as much as nine francs, either?"

"Well, it's not very far short of that. But why are you worrying about all this?"

She leant over a little to look at him more closely. The radiant air of awhile ago was gone. He had a little frown on his forehead, and his lips were trembling. His eyes were still looking straight in front of him; but before their bright gaze there was now a veil of moisture. He clutched his mother's hand more tightly.

It dawned on her, all at once, what idea it was that was troubling this boy of hers. It went to her heart. She had to make a great effort to stop the tears coming to her own eyes. She bent down and stroked his hair, his *béret*. In a voice stifled with emotion she murmured:

"My little boy! My dear little boy! My own little Louis!"

WILLIAM SAROYAN

## *Seventy Thousand Assyrians*

I HADN'T had a hair-cut in forty days and forty nights, and I was beginning to look like several violinists out of work. You know the look : genius gone to pot, and ready to join the Communist Party. We barbarians from Asia Minor are hairy people : when we need a hair-cut, we *need* a hair-cut. It was so bad, I had out-grown my only hat. (I am writing a very serious story, perhaps one of the most serious I shall ever write. That is why I am being flippant. Readers of Sherwood Anderson will begin to understand what I am saying after a while; they will know that my laughter is rather sad.) I was a young man in need of a hair-cut, so I went down to Third Street (San Francisco), to the Barber College, for a fifteen-cent hair-cut.

Third Street, below Harvard, is a district; think of the Bowery in New York, Main Street in Los Angeles : think of old men and boys, out of work, hanging around, smoking Bull Durham, talking about the Government, waiting for something to turn up, simply waiting. It was a Monday morning in August, and a lot of the tramps had come to the shop to brighten up a bit. The Japanese boy who was work-

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ing over the free chair had a waiting list of eleven; all the other chairs were occupied. I sat down and began to wait. Outside, as Hemingway (*The Sun Also Rises*; *Farewell to Arms*; *Death in the Afternoon*; *Winner Take Nothing*) would say, hair-cuts were four bits. I had twenty cents and a half-pack of Bull Durham. I rolled a cigarette, handed the pack to one of my contemporaries who looked in need of nicotine, and inhaled the dry smoke, thinking of America, what was going on politically, economically, spiritually. My contemporary was a boy of sixteen. He looked Iowa; splendid potentially, a solid American, but down, greatly down in the mouth. Little sleep, no change of clothes for several days, a little fear, etc. I wanted very much to know his name. A writer is always wanting to get the reality of faces and figures. Iowa said, "I just got in from Salinas. No work in the lettuce fields. Going north now, to Portland; try to ship out." I wanted to tell him how it was with me: rejected story from *Scribner's*, rejected essay from *The Yale Review*, no money for decent cigarettes, worn shoes, old shirts, but I was afraid to make something of my own troubles. A writer's troubles are always boring, a bit unreal. People are apt to feel, *Well, who asked you to write in the first place?* A man must pretend not to be a writer. I said, "Good luck, north." Iowa shook his head. "I know better. Give it a try, anyway. Nothing to lose." Fine boy, hope he isn't dead, hope he hasn't frozen, mighty cold these days (December 1933), hope he hasn't gone down; he deserved to live. Iowa, I hope you got work in Portland; I hope you are earning money; I hope you have rented a clean room with a warm bed in it; I hope you are sleeping nights, eating regularly, walking along like a human being, being happy. Iowa, my good wishes are with you. I have said a number of prayers for you. (All the same, I think he is dead by this time. It was in him



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the day I saw him, the low, malicious face of the beast, and at the same time all the theatres in America were showing, over and over again, an animated film-cartoon in which there was a song called "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?", and that's what it amounts to; people with money laughing at the death that is crawling slyly into boys like young Iowa, pretending that it isn't there, laughing in warm theatres. I have prayed for Iowa, and I consider myself a coward. By this time he must be dead, and I am sitting in a small room, talking about him, only talking.)

I began to watch the Japanese boy who was learning to become a barber. He was shaving an old tramp who had a horrible face, one of those faces that emerge from years and years of evasive living, years of being unsettled, of not belonging anywhere, of owning nothing, and the Japanese boy was holding his nose back (his own nose) so that he would not smell the old tramp. A trivial point in a story, a bit of data with no place in a work of art; nevertheless, I put it down. A young writer is always afraid some significant fact may escape him. He is always wanting to put in everything he sees. I wanted to know the name of the Japanese boy. I am profoundly interested in names. I have found that those that are unknown are the most genuine. Take a big name like Andrew Mellon. I was watching the Japanese boy very closely. I wanted to understand from the way he was keeping his sense of smell away from the mouth and nostrils of the old man what he was thinking, how he was feeling. Years ago, when I was seventeen, I pruned vines in my uncle's vineyard, north of Sanger, in the San Joaquin Valley, and there were several Japanese working with me, Yoshio Enomoto, Hideo Suzuki, Katsumi Sujimoto, and one or two others. These Japanese taught me a few simple phrases, *hello*, *how are you*, *fine day*, *isn't it*, *good-bye*, and

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so on. I said in Japanese to the barber student, "How are you?" He said in Japanese, "Very well, thank you." Then in impeccable English, "Do you speak Japanese? Have you lived in Japan?" I said, "Unfortunately, no. I am able to speak only one or two words. I used to work with Yoshio Enomoto, Hideo Suzuki, Katsumi Sujimoto; do you know them?" He went on with his work, thinking of the names. He seemed to be whispering, "Enomoto, Suzuki, Sujimoto." He said, "Suzuki. Small man?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I know him. He lives in San Jose. He is married now."

I want you to know that I am deeply interested in what people remember. A young writer goes out to places and talks to people. He tries to find out what they remember. I am not using great material for a short story. Nothing is going to happen in this work. I am not fabricating a fancy plot. I am not creating memorable characters. I am not using a slick style of writing. I am not building up a fine atmosphere. I have no desire to sell this story or any story to *The Saturday Evening Post* or to *Cosmopolitan* or to *Harper's*. I am not trying to compete with the great writers of short stories, men like Sinclair Lewis and Joseph Hergesheimer and Zane Grey, men who really know how to write, how to make up stories that will sell. Rich men, men who understand all the rules about plot and character and style and atmosphere and all that stuff. I have no desire for fame. I am not out to win the Pulitzer Prize or the Nobel Prize or any other prize. I am out here in the far West, in San Francisco, in a small room on Carl Street, writing a letter to common people, telling them in simple language things they already know. I am merely making a record, so if I wander around a little, it is because I am in no hurry and because I do not know the rules. If I have any desire at all, it is to show the brother-

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hood of man. This is a big statement and it sounds a little precious. Generally a man is ashamed to make such a statement. He is afraid sophisticated people will laugh at him. But I don't mind. I'm asking sophisticated people to laugh. That is what sophistication is for. I do not believe in races. I do not believe in governments. I see life as one life at one time, so many millions simultaneously, all over the earth. Babies who have not yet been taught to speak any language are the only race of the earth, the race of man : all the rest is pretence, what we call civilisation, hatred, fear, desire for strength. . . . But a baby is a baby. And the way they cry, there you have the brotherhood of man, babies crying. We grow up and we learn the words of a language and we see the universe through the language we know, we do not see it through all languages or through no language at all, through silence, for example, and we isolate ourselves in the language we know. Over here we isolate ourselves in English, or American as Mencken calls it. All the eternal things, in our words. If I want to do anything, I want to speak a more universal language. The heart of man, the unwritten part of man, that which is eternal and common to all races.

Now I am beginning to feel guilty and incompetent. I have used all this language and I am beginning to feel that I have said nothing. This is what drives a young writer out of his head, this feeling that nothing is being said. Any ordinary journalist would have been able to put the whole business into a three-word caption. Man is man, he would have said. Something clever, with any number of implications. But I want to use language that will create a single implication. I want the meaning to be precise, and perhaps that is why the language is so imprecise. I am walking around my subject, the impression I want to make, and I am

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trying to see it from all angles, so that I will have a whole picture, a picture of wholeness. It is the heart of man that I am trying to imply in this work.

Let me try again : I hadn't had a hair-cut in a long time and I was beginning to look seedy, so I went down to the Barber College on Third Street, and I sat in a chair. I said, "Leave it full in the back. I have a narrow head, and if you do not leave it full in the back, I will go out of this place looking like a horse. Take as much as you like off the top. No lotion, no water, comb it dry." Reading makes a full man, writing a precise one, as you see. This is what happened. It doesn't make much of a story, and the reason is that I have left out the barber, the young man who gave me the hair-cut.

He was tall, he had a dark serious face, thick lips, on the verge of smiling, but melancholy, thick lashes, sad eyes, a large nose. I saw his name on the card that was pasted on the mirror, Theodore Badal. A good name, genuine, a good young man, genuine. Theodore Badal began to work on my head. A good barber never speaks until he has been spoken to, no matter how full his heart may be.

"That name," I said, "Badal. Are you an Armenian?" I am an Armenian. People look at me and begin to wonder, so I come right out and tell them. "I am an Armenian," I say. Or they read something I have written and begin to wonder, so I let them know. "I am an Armenian," I say. It is a meaningless remark, but they expect me to say it, so I do. I have no idea what it is like to be an Armenian or what it is like to be an Englishman or a Japanese or anything else. I have a faint idea what it is like to be alive. This is the only thing that interests me greatly. This and tennis. I hope some day to write a great philosophical work on tennis, something on the order of *Death in the Afternoon*, but I am aware that I am not yet ready to undertake



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such a work. I feel that the cultivation of tennis on a large scale among the peoples of the earth will do much to annihilate racial differences, prejudices, hatred, etc. Just as soon as I have perfected my drive and my lob, I hope to begin my outline of this great work. (It may seem to some sophisticated people that I am trying to make fun of Hemingway. I am not. *Death in the Afternoon* is a pretty sound piece of prose. I could never object to it as prose. I cannot even object to it as philosophy. I think it is finer philosophy than that of Will Durant and Walter Pitkin. Even when Hemingway is a fool, he is at least an accurate fool. He tells you what actually takes place, and he doesn't allow the speed of an occurrence to make his exposition of it hasty. This is a lot. It is some sort of advancement for literature. To relate leisurely the nature and meaning of that which is very brief in duration.)

"Are you an Armenian?" I asked.

We are a small people, and whenever one of us meets another, it is an event. We are always looking around for someone to talk to in our language. Our most ambitious political party estimates that there are nearly two million of us living on the earth, but most of us don't think so. Most of us sit down and take a pencil and a piece of paper, and we take one section of the world at a time and imagine how many Armenians at the most are likely to be living in that section and we put the highest number on the paper, and then we go on to another section, India, Russia, Soviet Armenia, Egypt, Italy, Germany, France, America, South America, Australia, and so on, and after we add up our most hopeful figures the total comes to something a little less than a million. Then we start to think how big our families are, how high our birth-rate and how low our death-rate (except in times of war when massacres increase the death-rate), and we begin to imagine

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how rapidly we will increase if we are left alone a quarter of a century, and we feel pretty happy. We always leave out earthquakes, wars, massacres, famines, etc., and it is a mistake. I remember the Near East Relief drives in my home town. My uncle used to be our orator, and he used to make a whole auditorium full of Armenians weep. He was an attorney and he was a great orator. Well, at first the trouble was war. Our people were being destroyed by the enemy. Those who hadn't been killed were homeless and they were starving, *our own flesh and blood*, my uncle said, and we all wept. And we gathered money and sent it to our people in the old country. Then, after the war, when I was a bigger boy, we had another Near East Relief drive, and my uncle stood on the stage of the Civic Auditorium of my home town and he said, "Thank God this time it is not the enemy, but an earthquake. God has made us suffer. We have worshipped Him through trial and tribulation, through suffering and disease and torture and horror and (my uncle began to weep, began to sob) through the madness of despair, and now He has done this thing, and still we praise Him, still we worship Him. We do not understand the ways of God." And after the drive I went to my uncle and I said, "Did you mean what you said about God?" And he said, "That was oratory. We've got to raise money. What God? It is nonsense." "And when you cried?" I asked, and my uncle said, "That was real. I could not help it. I had to cry. Why, for God's sake, why must we go through all this God-damn hell? What have we done to deserve all this torture? Man won't let us alone. God won't let us alone. Have we done something? Aren't we supposed to be pious people? What is our sin? I am disgusted with God. I am sick of man. The only reason I am willing to get up and talk is that I don't dare keep my mouth shut. I can't bear the thought of

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more of our people dying. Jesus Christ, have we done something?"

I asked Theodore Badal if he was an Armenian.

He said, "I am an Assyrian."

Well, it was something. They, the Assyrians, came from our part of the world, they had noses like our noses, eyes like our eyes, hearts like our hearts. They had a different language. When they spoke we couldn't understand them, but they were a lot like us. It wasn't quite as pleasing as it would have been if Badal had been an Armenian, but it was something.

"I am an Armenian," I said. "I used to know some Assyrian boys in my home town, Joseph Sargis, Nito Elia, Tony Saleh. Do you know any of them?"

"Joseph Sargis, I know him," said Badal. "The others I do not know. We lived in New York until five years ago, then we came out west to Turlock. Then we moved up to San Francisco."

"Nito Elia," I said, "is a Captain in the Salvation Army." (I don't want anyone to imagine that I am making anything up, or that I am trying to be funny.) "Tony Saleh," I said, "was killed eight years ago. He was riding a horse and he was thrown and the horse began to run. Tony couldn't get himself free, he was caught by a leg, and the horse ran around and around for a half-hour and then stopped, and when they went up to Tony he was dead. He was fourteen at the time. I used to go to school with him. Tony was a very clever boy, very good at arithmetic."

We began to talk about the Assyrian language and the Armenian language, about the old world, conditions over there, and so on. I was getting a fifteen-cent hair-cut and I was doing my best to learn something at the same time, to acquire some new truth, some new appreciation of the

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wonder of life, the dignity of man. (Man has great dignity, do not imagine that he has not.)

Badal said, "I cannot read Assyrian. I was born in the old country, but I want to get over it."

He sounded tired, not physically, but spiritually.

"Why?" I said. "Why do you want to get over it?"

"Well," he laughed, "simply because everything is washed up over there." I am repeating his words precisely, putting in nothing of my own. "We were a great people once," he went on. "But that was yesterday, the day before yesterday. Now we are a topic in ancient history. We had a great civilisation. They're still admiring it. Now I am in America learning how to cut hair. We're washed up as a race, we're through, it's all over, why should I learn to read the language? We have no writers, we have no news—well, there is a little news: once in a while the English encourage the Arabs to massacre us, that is all. It's an old story, we know all about it. The news comes over to us through the Associated Press, anyway."

These remarks were very painful to me, an Armenian. I had always felt badly about my own people being destroyed. I had never heard an Assyrian speaking in English about such things. I felt great love for this young fellow. Don't get me wrong. There is a tendency these days to think in terms of pansies whenever a man says that he has affection for man. I think now that I have affection for all people, even for the enemies of Armenia, whom I have so tactfully not named. Everyone knows who they are. I have nothing against any of them, because I think of them as one man living one life at a time, and I know, I am positive, that one man at a time is incapable of the monstrosities performed by mobs. My objection is to mobs only.

"Well," I said, "it is much the same with us. We, too,



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are old. We still have our church. We still have a few writers, Aharonian, Isahakian, a few others, but it is much the same."

"Yes," said the barber, "I know. We went in for the wrong things. We went in for the simple things—peace and quiet and families. We didn't go in for machinery and conquest and militarism. We didn't go in for diplomacy and deceit and the invention of machine-guns and poison gases. Well, there is no use in being disappointed. We had our day, I suppose."

"We are hopeful," I said. "There is no Armenian living who does not still dream of an independent Armenia."

"Dream?" said Badal. "Well, that is something. Assyrians cannot even dream any more. Why, do you know how many of us are left on earth?"

"Two or three million," I suggested.

"Seventy thousand," said Badal. "That is all. Seventy thousand Assyrians in the world, and the Arabs are still killing us. They killed seventy of us in a little uprising last month. There was a small paragraph in the paper. Seventy more of us destroyed. We'll be wiped out before long. My brother is married to an American girl and he has a son. There is no more hope. We are trying to forget Assyria. My father still reads a paper that comes from New York, but he is an old man. He will be dead soon."

Then his voice changed, he ceased speaking as an Assyrian and began to speak as a barber: "Have I taken enough off the top?" he asked.

The rest of the story is pointless. I said *so long* to the young Assyrian and left the shop. I walked across town, four miles, to my room on Carl Street. I thought about the whole business: Assyria and this Assyrian, Theodore Badal, learning to be a barber, the sadness of his voice, the hopelessness

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of his attitude. This was months ago, in August, but ever since I have been thinking about Assyria, and I have been wanting to say something about Theodore Badal, a son of an ancient race, himself youthful and alert, yet hopeless. Seventy thousand Assyrians, a mere seventy thousand of that great people, and all the others quiet in death, and all the greatness crumbled and ignored, and a young man in America learning to be a barber, and a young man lamenting bitterly the course of history.

Why don't I make up plots and write beautiful love stories that can be made into motion pictures? Why don't I let these unimportant and boring matters go hang? Why don't I try to please the American reading public?

Well, I am an Armenian. Michael Arlen is an Armenian, too. He is pleasing the public. I have great admiration for him, and I think he has perfected a very fine style of writing and all that, but I don't want to write about the people he likes to write about. Those people were dead to begin with. You take Iowa and the Japanese boy and Theodore Badal, the Assyrian; well, they may go down physically, like Iowa, to death, or spiritually, like Badal, to death, but they are of the stuff that is eternal in man, and it is this stuff that interests me. You don't find them in bright places, making witty remarks about sex and trivial remarks about art. You find them where I found them, and they will be there for ever, the race of man, the part of man, of Assyria as much as of England, that cannot be destroyed, the part that massacre does not destroy, the part that earthquake and war and famine and madness and everything else cannot destroy.

This work is in tribute to Iowa, to Japan, to Assyria, to Armenia, to the race of man everywhere, to the dignity of that race, the brotherhood of things alive. I am not expecting Paramount Pictures to film this work. I am thinking of seventy

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thousand Assyrians, one at a time, alive, a great race. I am thinking of Theodore Badal, himself seventy thousand Assyrians and seventy million Assyrians, himself Assyria, and man, standing in a barber shop, in San Francisco, in 1933, and being, still, himself, the whole race.

E. MURIEL FISHER

## *The Lammas Pear Tree*

THE bus was full as it set out from the station yard for the little town of C——.

Winding its way through the narrow streets of the small French town, the sharp turns and corners forced the passengers in the rickety old bus heavily against their neighbours. The bright spring day, however, had put them all into a good humour, and they merely laughed as they swung from side to side. Only the elderly man with the heavy portfolio held aloof from the general cheerfulness around him.

He had caught the bus at the last moment, out of breath and visibly annoyed. It was evident that he was well known, for several passengers had exchanged the time of day with him civilly enough, but a look at his thin-lipped sarcastic mouth showed plainly that he was not a man to invite conversation.

“Yes,” he had answered curtly, in reply to a question, “my car had a breakdown, and I’ve had to leave it behind. I am lucky to have caught this bus, for Thursday is a busy day for me in C——.”

Thereupon, he had drawn a newspaper from his pocket and opened it as though to discourage further remarks.



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The bright sun poured through the window on his right, and it was as he rose to draw the curtain across it that he noticed the little old woman who occupied the seat just behind. A carpet bag was on her knees and, wrapped in crumpled brown paper, she held a branch of withering pear tree. Preoccupied and irritated though he was, he found himself, nevertheless, strangely moved as her old blue eyes looked up at him as trustingly as a child's.

She was old to be travelling alone, and he wondered what could have brought her to this little country town, for she was obviously a stranger.

She was still in his thoughts when he overheard the girl beside her make some remark. The old woman did not answer and, speaking louder, the girl repeated her question. To his surprise, the answer came in German. She did not understand, the old woman said, for she could not speak French.

Haltingly, feeling her way carefully in the unfamiliar German, the girl expressed her astonishment. "What brings you so far from home?" she asked.

Only too glad to talk at last to someone who understood, the white-haired old woman answered eagerly. She was on her way to C——, to the German cemetery near-by. Her son was buried there.

The man in the seat in front stirred. He turned his head sideways in order to hear better.

Oblivious to the curious glances of one or two of her fellow passengers, the old woman continued.

She came from a small village in Anhalt. Yes, that was in the centre of Germany. She and her husband lived there. They had married late; there had been her ailing father and mother, for one thing, and then Hans—that was

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her husband—had had to help bring up his brothers and sisters when his father died early.

But it had all come right in the end, and they had been so happy in their little cottage with its garden. And, then, one day, their son had been born. Such a beautiful baby he had been, and so good and happy-tempered. He never seemed to have any trouble cutting his teeth like other babies, and before, almost, they had thought about it, he was running everywhere, and could talk like a grown-up man.

And, afterwards, he had worked right through the village school, and was ready to start work. They had put him with the blacksmith, to learn the work of the smithy. To begin with, it had been merely working the bellows for him, but how proud he had been!

She would never forget the day he came home with his first earnings—all for her! He held them tightly in his hand, and was out of breath when he came to her in the kitchen, he had run home so fast! She had not wanted to take all the money, and he had been unwilling to keep any, but in the end it was his father who had settled the matter.

“Do as your mother wishes,” he had said; “you can buy something to remember this day by.”

That was how it had all begun.

How he had talked over what he wanted to buy, and what different ideas he had had! And then, quite suddenly, his mind was made up.

It was the rosy ripe apples and golden pears in Farmer Wiehmann’s orchard that had given him the idea. He rushed home one day to tell her that he would buy a pear tree, a Lammas pear that would have its fruit early in the year. And, a week or two later, the three of them had

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walked to the market-town and there he had bought his Lammas pear tree and had carried it home triumphantly. They had planted it in the garden that same evening.

"It will be big and fine by the time you are old and don't want to work so hard," he had said, "and then you can sell the early pears and that will help to pay the rent."

"You're a good lad," his father had answered. "Your mother and I will hope to see your children playing under the tree when that time comes."

And then the war had come.

The young tree had rooted well, and was growing steadily, and it was when it was bursting into its first few delicate white blossoms that he had come home for the last time to say good-bye. They had never seen him again.

When the news came, his father had said no word of complaint. He had comforted her, and they had grown closer together, the two of them, in their sorrow, though they rarely spoke of their loss. But she knew that the boy was never long absent from his thoughts.

And so the years had gone by. He had grown silent, and had aged early for so strong a man. The tree was large and fully grown now; in the spring it was beautiful, covered with blossom, and at Lammas-tide the early pears had always fetched a good price.

The bus stopped. Hurriedly, half starting from her seat, the old woman turned anxiously to the driver.

"Is this C——?" she asked, forgetting that he would not understand.

Several people turned round, but it was the elderly man who answered.

"Not yet, madame," he soothed her.

With a little sigh, the old woman settled back into her seat.

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“And is this from the pear tree?” asked the girl, pointing to the branch on the old woman’s lap.

“Aye, that it is,” came the slow answer. “My man fell ill in the winter. Ailing like, for he would mostly go to work. But six weeks ago he took to his bed, and he’ll never leave it more.”

The old voice quivered. “He talks about the boy quite often now, and one day he said he would so like a branch from the pear tree to be planted on his grave. They wrote to tell us, you know, where his grave was,” she added in explanation. “So he thought that maybe we could ask someone to do it for us. Fair set on it, he was, but it seems it is difficult to send things to France to be planted on a German grave.”

The old blue eyes looked inquiringly at the girl, who shook her head. “I’m afraid I don’t know the regulations,” she said.

“And then he said that perhaps I could go myself! Me! that had never been more than twenty miles from home in my life!”

She fell silent, lost in her thoughts.

“It was the Wiehmanns up at the farm,” she continued, after a pause, “who told me what I must do. Look, they wrote down the places for me so that I could show them when I was asked questions.” She opened her purse and took out a much-folded piece of paper. “And they put me in the train.”

Once more she stopped, and her fingers slowly caressed the drooping pear blossom.

“How did you manage the journey?” asked the girl. “It must have been so long and tiring.”

“Everyone was very kind, but the night was long,” and the old woman gave a tremulous sigh. “I shall be glad to



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find the grave, and then go home. They say the cemetery is an hour's walk from C——."

Once more the bus drew up. They had reached the little town of C——, and the driver came to help her out.

"Good-bye," she waved to the girl. "I wish you were coming my way," she added wistfully.

She smiled bravely, but her lips trembled. Now that she was so near her journey's end, deep misgivings seized her, and she felt suddenly very tired. What if, after all, she couldn't find her boy's grave among so many others?

The elderly man also got down from the bus. He hurried after her.

"Madame," he said, raising his hat, "I overheard a little of your conversation, and"—his voice came jerkily—"it happens—er—that I have business with—with the official in charge of the German cemetery, and I must take a car. Might I offer you a lift?"

The old eyes filled with tears. "You are very good, and thank you kindly, sir."

It did not take him long to hire a car. Gratefully, she settled into the comfortable seat. Soon her long journey would be over and she could go home. Home to Hans. This part that she had dreaded so much, in a strange land, and among people of a different speech, how easy it had been! Even the long walk at the end had been spared her.

Timidly, she turned to the man beside her.

"I can never repay your kindness," she said.

A smile crossed the lined face of her companion. He thought of the clients waiting for him, and wondered what they would say if they knew that he, the crabbed, precise lawyer—oh, he knew well enough what they thought of him!—who was never late for an appointment and who

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exacted the same rigid punctuality from all who had dealings with him, had, on the impulse of the moment, chartered an old hackney car in order to conduct an old countrywoman to the grave of her son.

The smile still softening the harsh lines of his face, he looked at her with deep understanding.

"It's nothing," he said gently. "In the war I, too, lost an only son."

## END PAGES

### LITERARY RAMBLES

CANADA, in a literary sense, is somewhat of an unknown land. Recently we have heard of Mazo de la Roche, Stephen Leacock has long delighted us, and exceptionally well read and studious persons may think of Parkman. There are others, of course, but neither very many nor very eminent names.

So I confess to some astonishment at being able to announce the simultaneous publication of three books of Canadian origin, of utterly different types, each of which I believe to be a book of exceptional merit and interest. Perhaps this is a portent, and Canada is about to claim a prominent place in the literary world.

The first is a romantic book, and its very origin is a romance in itself—*The Pilgrims of the Wild*, by Grey Owl. If there is any parallel to this achievement of a half-breed Indian, writing under appalling difficulties hundreds of miles from civilisation, building up his English vocabulary by listening to the wireless, I do not know it. Grey Owl has the sure touch of the born writer, both when he is telling his own love story delicately and charmingly, and when he is describing his, and his wife's life work in saving

for Canada the last survivors of the "little brothers of the Red Indian," the Beaver people.

Thanks to *Country Life*, *The Illustrated London News* and to newspapers and films, Grey Owl and his work have already won international celebrity of a fleeting kind: unless I am much mistaken, this book will give him fame of a more enduring nature, as the author of one of the most moving and delightful books about animals and human beings ever written. German and Swedish versions are now being prepared, and others will follow.

The second is a satire, and something else besides; it has humour and pathos too. In *The Kinder Bees*, Gilbert Knox shows little or no mercy to the snobs and politicians of Canada's capital, though I should add that people very like his characters can be found without much difficulty within a mile or two of Westminster. He spares no one, even the (imaginary) Prime Minister and the Governor-General. Uplift and Good Works, Democracy, and the workings of Parliamentary Government get some hard knocks—excuse the unintentional pun. I picked up the manuscript of this book, just to give it a lan-

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guid glance, at midnight after a tiring day's work: I spent the next two hours in bed, shouting with laughter, and, believe me, in these days it takes a lot to make a publisher laugh. Professor Leacock must look to his laurels; he's no longer the only humorist in Canada.

The third book is a very different affair indeed—*Father Abraham*, by W. G. Hardy.

The author has taken the Bible story of Abraham, married it to the most recent archaeological discoveries throwing light on the times of the Patriarchs, and then has re-told the story of Abraham's life in novel form. Mr. Hardy is Pro-

fessor of Classics at the University of Alberta, but there is nothing donnish about his work: it is red-blooded, vigorous writing which does not shrink from bringing out the darker side of life as it must have been lived in those days, though nothing in the treatment of the Bible story should offend religious-minded people.

Mr. Hardy has done a remarkable piece of work, which will, I think, attract much attention.

Having been brought up and educated in Canada, I feel a certain patriotic pride in these three books, and at being able to publish them together.

### *Some other Books Recommended*

EDGAR ALLAN POE

A Critical Biography

*by*

UNA POPE-HENNESEY

SPANISH

RAGGLE TAGGLE

*by*

WALLER STARKIE

A LIFE OF ONE'S OWN

*by*

JOANNA FIELD

THINKING ALOUD

*by*

A. G. STREET

THEY KNEW MR. KNIGHT

*by*

DOROTHY WHIPPLE

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1934

(American and English)

*Edited by* E. J. O'BRIEN



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### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

HUGH FORSYTH, who has recently come down from Cambridge, where he edited the *Granta*, contributes another story on his inimitable young *King Timothy*.

VINCENT SHEEAN was born when the nineteenth century had only a few days to go. He became a foreign correspondent at twenty-one for the *Chicago Tribune* and in his three-and-a-half years' service for that newspaper he was present at a variety of disturbances in Europe, including the Rhineland Separatist troubles, the occupation of the Ruhr, the Spanish *coup d'état* of 1928, the Mateotti affair in Italy; gave a report of Hitler's putsch of 1923 over the telephone when nobody had ever heard of his name, which had to be spelled, "H for Harold, I for Italy" and so on . . . an interesting and adventurous career.

GEORGE MANNING-SANDERS is the author of three novels—*Drum and Monkey*, *The Burnt Man*, and *Little Comfort*—and of a quantity of short stories. He is the husband of Ruth Manning-Sanders, the poet and novelist, and father of Joan Manning-Sanders, the young artist. For years, in order that he might be free to live his own life, he had no home but a caravan, but now lives in a fishing hamlet at Land's End, Cornwall, in a thatched cottage

reconstructed from a ruin four hundred years old. Has many good friends amongst the fishermen, a hardy, independent and humour-loving remnant of unspoilt Cornwall. Most of his stories are based on these people and their activities along the stretch of harbourless rocky coast.

FRANK O'CONNOR, a young Irish author of two novels, began to prepare a collected edition of his own works at the age of twelve. Learned several languages while interned by the Free State Government, and after his release won a prize for a study of Turgenev in Irish. By profession and inclination a librarian.

HILDA VAUGHAN comes from one county south of that lovely Montgomeryshire which Eiluned Lewis has preserved for all time in her delicate *Dew on the Grass*. Hilda Vaughan's novels, the brilliant work of a richly imaginative mind, have that sense of contact with the countryside that seems to infuse the work of all writers who have Celtic blood.

JULES ROMAINS, the famous French author of the *Men of Good Will* series, has just taken to himself a wife—in fact one of his admirers; she was sufficiently interested in this series to write to him about it, with the happy result just recorded. The story printed in this number shows his careful attention to the building of

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character, within a slight domestic setting, with vivid results.

WILLIAM SAROYAN, who is twenty-six years old, was born of Armenian parents in the Fresno vineyard district of California. An American, thus, by birth and directness of outlook, there is still much of the East in his nature, and in him a line of poets and tale-tellers have had their influence. His father, who was born in Armenia, was himself a writer and a teacher: he wrote in Armenian, and young Saroyan's grandmother, whom he has introduced in a story, is herself a story-teller, a philosophical old lady with a burden of tales that goes far back into the past of legends. His volume of short stories, *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, will be published by Faber and Faber in the Spring.

E. M. FISHER is entirely unknown, but has won the prize for the best short story sent in during November.

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### THE SHORT STORY COMPETITION

FROM the great number of entries submitted during November we conclude that there

are still some writers who want to turn out something rather different from the ordinary stereotyped story; that they *have* found our magazine different confirms our own opinion.

The prize of Two Guineas goes to

**E. M. Fisher**

for a story entitled

**"The Lammas Pear Tree"**

which we are including in this number.

"Peacock's Feathers,"

by P. Hartnoll,  
and

"Eternal Triangle,"

by D. Carpmael,

are both highly commended.

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The general level of the stories, while being most promising, did not reach the standard of the three mentioned above.

We take this opportunity of saying that should any story or other feature in our magazine be a special favourite or a question of dislike amongst readers we should appreciate a line about it.

M. E. F.

